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## MILITARY FORCE DEVELOPMENT IN VIETNAM

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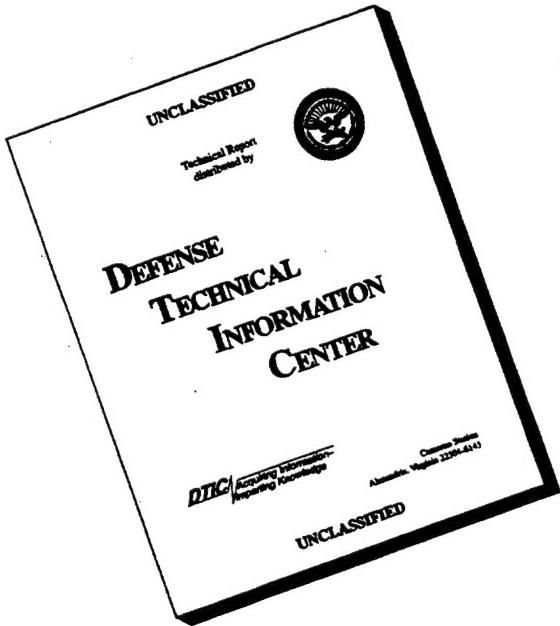
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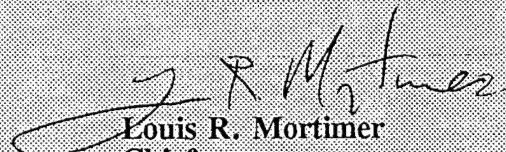
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PREFACE

This paper examines military force development in the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. Projections discussed are for the mid-1980s to mid-1900s and are based on events that have occurred at the national level in Hanoi, or in the border region with China since the Sino-Vietnamese war of 1979.

The study was prepared from open sources available at the Library of Congress. A selective bibliography of these references is appended as an aid to further research.

"La seule constante en cette péninsule  
est la guerre."

Richard Sola

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## SUMMARY

Although Vietnam is a closed society, not given to open debate, it is possible for outsiders to make informed judgments on military force development. One such judgment is a determination that force development decisions probably are the prerogative of the military members of the Politburo. However, because of interlocking political and military positions occupied by the same incumbents, such decisions are likely to entail little conflict or clash of interests.

Another judgment that can be made is that military force development in Vietnam will be based on two geostrategic realities: enmity with China and friendship with the USSR. In the case of China, Vietnam faces the hostility of the nation that is the most populous and has the largest armed forces in the world. Juxtaposed to this fact, however, is the premise that Beijing's strategic rivalry with the Soviet Union would prevent Vietnam from facing the full brunt of the Chinese Armed Forces in any conflict. In the Soviet case, the association between Hanoi and Moscow has been so mutually fruitful that it will bear no attenuation in the near term. Hanoi receives economic aid and virtually all its war materiel and fuel from the Soviet Union. At the same time, the alliance with the Kremlin inhibits extreme Chinese action against Vietnam. Moscow, in turn, derives great strategic advantage from its access to Vietnamese military facilities, principally, the anchorage at Cam Ranh Bay.

Vietnam's overall military force development still remains rooted in the premise "people's war, people's army," in which the entire Vietnam population is enlisted in the defense effort. In the future, however, Soviet defense doctrine may come to bear on Vietnamese force development efforts, as Soviet military thought and advisers gradually supplant Chinese influence.

In pursuing its force development goals, Vietnam has made an institutional commitment to reliance on a standing army and reserves. Concurrent with this commitment will be a downgrading of guerrilla forces and a renewed emphasis on the combined-arms team. Such developments reflect the Vietnamese need to structure their forces to counter any Chinese military threat according to a policy of strategic defense. Within this policy, geographic considerations in northern Vietnam will compel the adoption of a static defense strategy, with the appropriate emplacement of troops, artillery, and antitank units. Regional forces, perhaps reinforced by economic construction divisions, would have the mission of delaying and disorganizing the adversary. Main force infantry divisions with artillery would have the mission of engaging and destroying enemy forces.

Vietnamese main force deployments, in response to likely Chinese invasion scenarios and probable axes of advance, could be on the periphery of the Red River Delta, the heartland of northern Vietnam. Possible hubs of such deployments are Kep-Bac Giang, Thai Nguyen, Phu Tho and Hoa Binh.

In command and control matters, a pressing requirement is for unified command of the frontier areas. The creation of Military Theaters of Operation (MTO) may be intended for this purpose. Qualitative improvements

in communication and coordination between MTOs and lateral and subordinate echelons are a likely development.

In force expansion, two determinants hold sway: the threat from China and the constraints of demography. If Chinese hostility diminishes, Vietnam may undertake an incremental, measured demobilization. However, if Chinese hostility increases, prompting an expansion of Vietnamese Armed Forces, the incessant manpower drain will presage further economic stagnation and hardship for the people.

Another force development concomitant concerns morale in the armed forces. In Vietnam, ameliorative measures taken in this respect have been the promulgation of new laws determining conditions of service for both officers and enlisted men in the Vietnamese People's Army (VPA). Other morale-building measures may include better distribution of supplies and an opportunity for VPA personnel to improve their quality of life.

The acquisition of defense materiel for force development will compel the VPA to come to terms with several dichotomous variables. Among them will be the questions of more versus better, end items versus spare parts, and foreign procurement versus domestic production.

Materiel considerations and projections in response to military force development in the various branches of the Vietnamese Armed Forces may take the following directions:

- In the infantry, there may be a continued reliance on the AK-47 and BTR series armored personnel carriers for the time being, rather than a conversion to the AK-74 and BMP armored fighting vehicle.
- In armor, the VPA cannot hope to match quantitatively the Chinese People's Liberation Army (CPLA) in main battle tanks (MBT), and the terrain in northern Vietnam is not suited to this type of warfare. Developments are likely to concentrate on antitank weapons, primarily wire-guided missiles.
- In artillery, there may be significant materiel acquisitions and upgrading, focusing principally on towed pieces and multiple rocket launchers (MRL).
- In chemical warfare, toxic agents of Soviet manufacture are already used in Vietnam, and continuing collaborative effort between Moscow and Hanoi may be expected in the development of new toxins and delivery systems for this type of weapon.
- In military engineering matters, the Vietnamese Armed Forces will need to keep on hand rugged, low technology equipment to repair and upgrade for tactical purposes its extensive, but poorly maintained network of roads.
- In air force developments, future acquisitions may be additional MiG-23/FLOGGERS, of which there is already a squadron in the Vietnamese inventory, or the Su-24/FENCER fighter-bomber. Beyond the most

routine maintenance, upkeep for both high-performance aircraft would be completely dependent on the USSR.

- The Vietnamese Navy is the smallest military service and probably will undergo little force development in the near term. The USSR will see no need to provide antiship missiles with nuclear warheads.



Map of Vietnam

X

## MILITARY FORCE DEVELOPMENT IN VIETNAM

### 1. INTRODUCTION: OBSERVABLE REALITIES

Military force development is defined, for purposes of this study, as the aggregate of decisions and measures taken at the national level to raise, maintain, upgrade, equip, and deploy an armed force capable of fulfilling the military missions prescribed for it by the leadership of a sovereign state.

In open societies, force development decisions are formulated against a background of public and parliamentary debate. In such forums, numerous opinion molders add their voices to the wide spectrum of views presented until consensus or compromise is achieved. In Vietnam, by contrast, military force development decisions are neither subject to public scrutiny nor disclosed to the outside world. The leadership in Hanoi is under no compulsion to keep its own citizens informed, to say nothing of foreign observers. Yet, it can be argued that a reasoned prognostication of force developments can be made more easily for Vietnam than for the West. In the Western nations, there is a cacophony of voices clamoring to be heard. In Vietnam, there are far fewer voices; there is only a small circle of elderly men, known personally to one another for an entire generation. It is these men who have reserved unto themselves the prerogative of decisionmaking, including the formulation of military force development plans. In the United States, the global perspective of Washington and the competition with the Soviet Union compels the shifting of military priorities in the face of finite resources versus worldwide commitments. In Vietnam, a poor nation with scant resources and a power projection capability limited to its own geographic region, the horizons are far more circumscribed and the variables far fewer. Hanoi's force development plans can be reduced to the consensus of a few party officials and to the function of two diametrically opposed geostrategic realities: the hostility of China with whom Vietnam must exist in geographic contiguity, and the close friendship with the Soviet Union on whom it must depend for much of its economic and military development. Keeping in mind the nation's leadership and these realities, plus regional ambitions and internal security requirements, it is possible to make some rational judgments about the directions the Vietnamese Armed Forces will take in the future.

### 2. THE DECISIONMAKERS

#### a. The Politburo

Vietnam is a totalitarian state and a closed society. Its aging leaders have been at the helm of power for decades and are responsible to no electorate. Western scholars have noted that it is saddled with a bureaucratic nightmare, that is, a dense complex of party, state, and mass organizations, all marching together in lock step, totally centralized and totally impervious to any deviations from the orthodoxy promulgated by the inner circle in Hanoi. It is also a state in which the leadership is obsessed with total control and cannot decentralize its decisionmaking, lest this attenuate its power and loosen its grip on the nation.<sup>1</sup>

In Vietnam, force development determinations are made at the apex of decisionmaking authority in the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Vietnamese Communist Party (VCP). It is the self-appointed task of the Politburo "to set forth basic programs and measures pertaining to the various revolutionary lines, with instructions, especially on matters regarding the application of the lines for economic constitution and management, the organization of life, the consolidation of the national defense systems [emphasis added], and the maintenance of political security and diplomatic activities."<sup>2</sup>

The Politburo, since the March 1982 Fifth VCP Party Congress, has been composed of 13 full members and two alternate members (see appendix A for membership list). Within the Politburo, there is an informal inner circle of the five most senior members who dominate decisionmaking in Vietnam. Together with their ages in 1984, they are:

- o Le Duan (74)
- o Truong Chinh (77)
- o Pham Van Dong (78)
- o Pham Hung (72)
- o Le Duc Tho (74)<sup>3</sup>

Of these five, the two most powerful are Le Duan and Le Duc Tho because they control appointments to key agencies such as the Ministry of the Interior, the Planning Commission, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the General Political Directorate and General Logistics Departments of the Vietnamese People's Army (VPA), and the Ministry of Transportation and Communication.<sup>4</sup>

#### b. Military Leaders

Irrespective of the power wielded by the above personalities, however, all of them are party generalists who lack any depth of military expertise. To compensate for this, there are five senior military officers in the Politburo at present and one alternate member. They are:

- o Senior General Chu Huy Man
- o Senior General Do Muoi
- o Senior General Vo Van Kiet
- o Senior General Van Tien Dung
- o Colonel General Le Duc Anh
- o Senior General Dong Si Nguyen (alternate member)<sup>5</sup>

The last three are new members who were elevated to their positions at the Fifth Party Congress.<sup>6</sup> The best known is Senior General Van Tien Dung, the conqueror of South Vietnam. However, at least two others are believed to have had considerable combat experience as well. Chu Huy Man was a commander in the Western Highlands, while Le Duc Anh was in charge of the Vietnamese spearhead that invaded Kampuchea in 1978.<sup>7</sup>

These officers, because of their professional credentials, probably wield the most influence in formulating military decisions, including force development plans in Vietnam. They have a generation of military experience

behind them, fighting a host of enemies under a variety of conditions. They are well aware of the capabilities and limitations of the VPA and of what the Armed Forces need and what they can reasonably obtain and put to use. The force development issues that they present to the Politburo, therefore, are likely to be formulated with the full knowledge of VPA capabilities and unhindered by either VCP doctrinaire bias or party rhetoric. Behind the scenes, Vietnam's defense leadership is likely to be quite pragmatic in defining force development imperatives in terms of what it perceives national and party interests to be and to be unconstrained by domestic or international opinion. The military members of the Politburo, however, are not given a blank check on all defense issues. Politburo decisions reportedly are made by vote, but with the more senior members such as Le Duan, Truong Chinh, and Le Duc Tho exercising a disproportionate influence on the deliberations during the closed-door sessions. It is a reasonable assumption that the aging party generalists would defer to specialized expertise and accord the younger military members considerable latitude in formulating positions on armed forces deployments, manpower and equipment levels, while at the same time reserving approval or veto authority over the positions staked out by the military professionals and their staffs.

c. The Party-Military Relationship

The Vietnamese Armed Forces have considerable prestige because of Hanoi's perception that they inflicted decisive defeats upon three large powers: France, the United States, and China. Furthermore, they ensured the survival of the Vietnamese state proclaimed in 1945 by Ho Chi Minh, accomplished its territorial expansion at the expense of former South Vietnam, and now safeguard Hanoi's position of preeminence in Indochina.

Hanoi's military leadership retains a strong and influential voice in the government because its key figures are "double-slotted" and occupy senior positions in the party hierarchy as well. The entire command structure of the Vietnamese Armed Forces is "a complex matrix of state and society."<sup>8</sup> Van Tien Dung, probably the most powerful figure in Hanoi's military establishment, is Minister of Defense and a member of the Politburo. He occupies a wide array of concurrent military party posts: Chairman of the Central Military Party Committee (CMPC), Secretary of the Ministry of Defense Party Committee (MDPC), a member of the National Defense Council, and a member of the VCP Central Committee. Of the other military figures who also are members of the Politburo, Senior General Chu Huy Man is Vice Chairman of the Council of State and Director of the Political General Department of the VPA General Staff. Senior General Do Muoi, in addition to his Politburo and Central Committee positions, is Vice Chairman of the Council of Ministers and Chairman of the Vietnam-Romania Commission. Colonel General Le Duc Anh is a Vice Minister of Defense.<sup>9</sup>

The modalities by which such senior military leaders wield influence below Politburo level and shape defense decisions remain open to question, however. They are spread too thin among too many concurrent positions to be able to devote themselves fully to any single task. They probably confine themselves to the promulgation of some policy guidance and leave the actual formulation of force development issues to the staffs of two powerful agencies: the CMPC and the Ministry of Defense/VPA General Staff. The CMPC

is the ultimate authority for military decisionmaking as indicated in figures 1 and 2. Guided by the broad political objectives expressed by the Politburo and the Central Committee, the CMPC determines defense policy and translates the Politburo's will into specific military orders.<sup>10</sup> However, the division of labor that accounts for the difference in functions between the CMPC and the Ministry of Defense or the VPA General Staff is conjectural. In the Vietnamese military establishment, there is much overlap of responsibility, considerable exercise of dual functions, and much shared collective authority among offices at the staff level. The VPA, thus, is vastly overorganized.<sup>11</sup> Under these circumstances, it may be difficult to make distinctions in bureaucratic authority or responsibility in the Vietnamese military establishment. Irrespective of which staff agency formulates and coordinates a force development action, there is likely to be no clash of interest between the CMPC and the Ministry of Defense since the same individual, General Van Tien Dung, sits at the apex of both bodies. Since Vietnam is a highly centralized polity, decisions affecting force development probably are reserved to the most senior echelons of the military hierarchy.

### **3. GEOSTRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS**

#### **a. China - An Implacable Enemy**

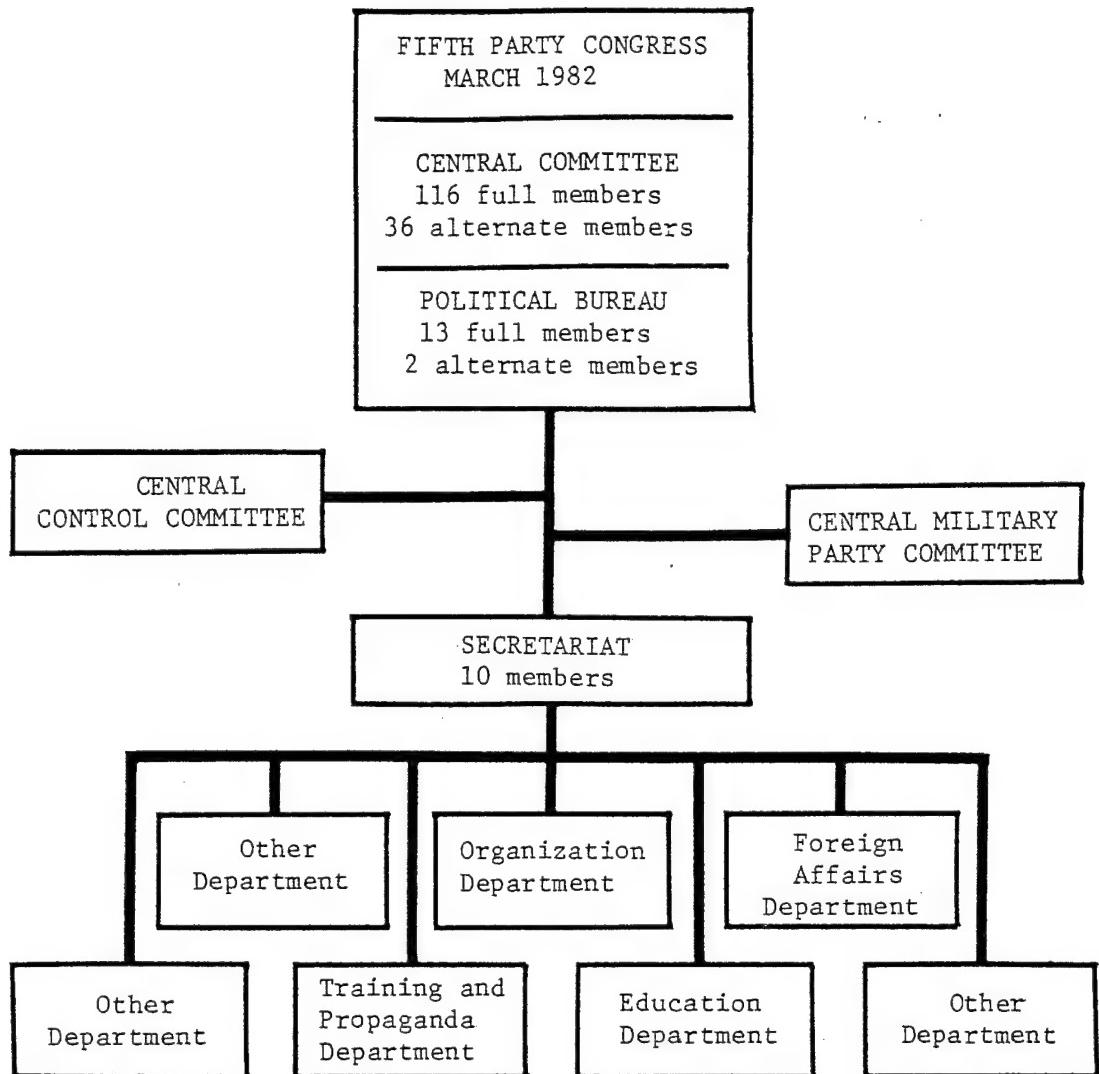
Force development decisions are not addressed in a political vacuum in Vietnam. No nation, no matter how doctrinaire its leadership, can undertake defense planning without consideration of its geostrategic position, its national interests, and its principal potential enemies. Politburo leaders, whether they be aging revolutionaries or senior generals, must address these realities if logical conclusions on Vietnam's military force development and deployment are to be formulated. However secretive Politburo deliberations may be, therefore, Hanoi's geostrategic position is observable to outsiders and permits interpolations on Vietnam's defense posture and force development plans.

The first geostrategic reality that Hanoi must address is the present enmity between Vietnam and China. This hostility was given official ratification at the VCP Fifth Party Congress in March 1982, where conference proceedings noted that:

Chinese reactionaries intend to weaken Vietnam in all respects, and eventually to conquer our country with a two-pronged attack, up from the south and down from the north . . .<sup>12</sup>

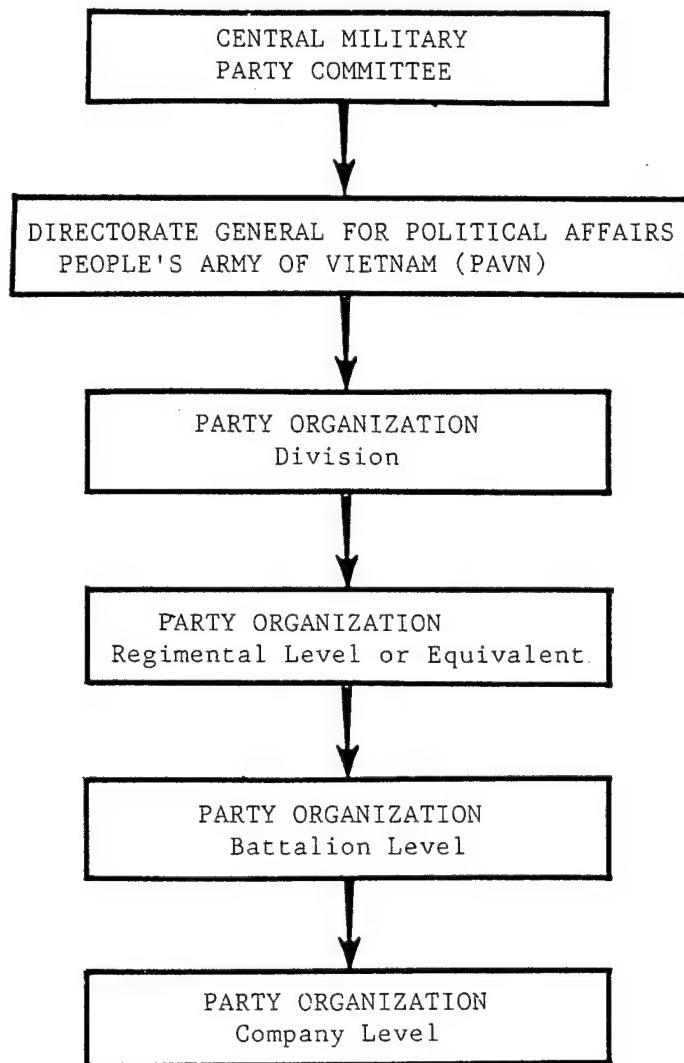
The Chinese leaders have all along been frenziedly pursuing big-nation expansionism and hegemonism. They have not yet given up their scheme of getting Vietnam, Laos, and Kampuchea into China's grip. They regard the three Indochinese countries as primary targets for aggression and annexation on their path of expansion into Southeast Asia.<sup>13</sup>

This enmity in terms of Vietnam's force development plans means that, for the time being, Hanoi must face across its northern border the largest armed force in the world, coupled with recurrent, veiled threats of a "second



[SOURCE: Nguyen Van Canh, Vietnam Under Communism  
(Stanford: Hoover Institution, 1983), p. 57.]

Figure 1. VCP Structure at the Central Level.



[SOURCE: Nguyen Van Canh, Vietnam Under Communism (Stanford: Hoover Institution, 1983), p. 59.]

Figure 2. VCP and the Army.

lesson," that is, another punitive invasion of unpredictable dimensions to be unleashed by Beijing. The magnitude of this threat can be better understood if it is noted that at the end of 1983, the Chinese Armed Forces numbered 4.2 million personnel under arms, with the ground forces of the Chinese People's Liberation Army (CPLA) accounting for some 3.25 million.<sup>14</sup> These forces, partially as a result of deficiencies disclosed in the Sino-Vietnamese border war, are now undergoing modernization which in the long run, will bring about a gradual upgrading of their capabilities. For Hanoi, there can be small comfort at this growing military strength of a populous neighbor whose belligerence toward Vietnam in recent years has been a matter of record.

Simply drawing the strategic balance sheet between Vietnam and China presents a misleading picture of the threat faced by Hanoi because the sheer number of Chinese troops is deceptive. To begin with, most of the CPLA remains tied down, either as a strategic reserve, generally around Beijing, or in static defense positions along the Sino-Soviet border. In addition, should Sino-Vietnamese hostilities break out anew, Beijing must take into account a possible Soviet military response in support of its allies in Hanoi, and must hold back a certain number of its troops to counter any threat arising along the lengthy, vulnerable, common border with the USSR. Paradoxically, therefore, at precisely the time China would need the most troops to bring overwhelming military superiority to bear against Vietnam, it would have the fewest troops to spare because of the uncertain reaction from the Kremlin.

A more precise estimation of the Chinese military threat to Vietnam can be interpolated from the 1979 border war. In that brief campaign, the Chinese reportedly had available for commitment over 600,000 troops or about 20 percent of its ground forces.<sup>15</sup> This is probably close to the maximum number of troops that China could deploy against Vietnam in a future conflict, given Beijing's strategic concerns with the USSR. In any "second round" with Vietnam, Beijing will apply the lessons learned from the 1979 conflict, and any offensive launched against Hanoi will be better led than China's previous punitive effort.

In determining force development options, therefore, Hanoi must plan to counter a Chinese military invasion of at least .5 to .6 million troops. Of this number, there are varying estimates of about 20 CPLA divisions or up to two army groups totalling 300,000 personnel already deployed close to the Sino-Vietnamese border.<sup>16</sup> By comparison, this approximates the size of the actual Chinese invasion force massed in 1979.<sup>17</sup> Much of that strength was never committed to battle. The initial Chinese spearhead consisted of about 100,000 men. The remainder of the invasion force was kept in reserve.<sup>18</sup> One source estimates that there were never more than 75,000 Chinese troops on Vietnamese territory at any one time.<sup>19</sup> If this is correct, it raises the specter of what a larger Chinese force unrestrained by limited objectives could accomplish. It will be noted that with this modest ratio of its overall troops in contact and in spite of serious logistical deficiencies the CPLA took and held the initiative. With this size force, Chinese forces devastated six Vietnamese border provinces and managed to fight through unfamiliar and inhospitable terrain against dogged, heavy resistance, until it stood poised on the fringes of the Red River Delta, the heartland of Vietnam. China then declared a cease-fire and withdrew in good order with its military formations intact. Although Vietnam claimed that it had stopped the Chinese juggernaut,

Hanoi had little cause for rejoicing at the momentum the limited CPLA thrust was able to maintain and the damage it was able to inflict. Ironically, however, from the force development standpoint, the lesson that Beijing sought to teach Vietnam was not the one Hanoi absorbed; instead the lesson imparted to Vietnam was the arousal of an implacable resolve to stop a future Chinese offensive that might exceed in ferocity, scope, and destructiveness the 1979 border war. To do this--to recruit, equip, and deploy suitable military power able to discourage or halt any future Chinese attack--is the principal force development imperative facing the decisionmakers of the VCP Politburo.

#### **b. The Soviet Union - A Reliable Friend**

The second geostrategic reality that Vietnam must confront is its relationship with Moscow, Hanoi's most steadfast friend and ally since the November 1978 Treaty of Friendship. Because of the geographic distance and cultural disparities that separate the two states, there has been some disparagement of the relationship between them as "a marriage of convenience." Such a designation fails to take into account the ideological kinship between Hanoi and Moscow and the substantial mutual advantages, surpassing the merely convenient, that have accrued to each side since their reinvigorated rapprochement following the Sino-Vietnamese border war. Ties between Hanoi and Moscow have become so mutually valuable, that an attenuation of the relationship in the near to middle term would be in the interests of neither country.

For Vietnam, the benefits of the Soviet connection have been economic, technological, and military. Soviet aid in the first two categories has assisted in the postwar rehabilitation of Vietnam. For example, Soviet projects to develop the Vietnamese infrastructure include construction of the Pha Lai Geothermal Power Station, with a projected capacity of 640,000 KW/hr; construction of the Hoa Binh Hydroelectric Power Station, with a projected capacity of 2 million KW/hr; construction of the Bim Son Cement Plant (Thanh Hoa Province) and the Lam Thao Superphosphate Plant (Vinh Phu Province); reconstruction of the Thanh Long Bridge near Hanoi; repair of the Hanoi-Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon) railroad line; expansion of Haiphong Port; development of the Mong Duong coalmine, with a capacity of 9 million tons a year; and offshore exploration for oil and gas on the continental shelf off Vung Tau.<sup>20</sup> Such aid has been relevant to Vietnam's needs, and upon completion the projects will assuredly play their part in bringing the country back from the economic abyss toward which it has been recurrently edging, and will help it achieve self-sufficiency. Nevertheless, one cannot forego the impression that the Vietnamese people have endured so much privation during an entire generation of warfare that had Soviet aid not been forthcoming the population simply would have done without, and tightened its collective belt another notch.

In the matter of armaments for the Vietnamese Armed Forces, this self-sufficiency premise has no validity. Since 1979, the USSR has provided 97 percent of the military hardware used by Vietnam.<sup>21</sup> Reportedly, this has been furnished by the Kremlin free of charge.<sup>22</sup> In the absence of a defense industry in Vietnam and with the steady deterioration of captured US equipment, Soviet military aid has surpassed mere convenience for Hanoi; it has become indispensable to the defense posture of the regime and to its power projection capability in the Indochinese peninsula. Virtually every tank,

armored personnel carrier, artillery piece, naval vessel, and aircraft at the disposal of the Vietnamese military establishment has come from Soviet sources. Nor has Soviet largesse been confined to such major items. Virtually every round fired by Vietnamese forces in Kampuchea and artillery shell expended on the Chinese frontier has come from Soviet munition factories. All POL supplies for Vietnam originate from Soviet refineries. The entire Hanoi defense establishment would rapidly become immobilized and defenseless without the steady infusion of Soviet military aid of all kinds.

In a more general force development sense, Soviet military assistance to a large extent will determine the force levels that can be sustained by Hanoi. It will make no sense in the future for the VPA General Staff to raise another infantry or armored regiment if supporting equipment is not forthcoming from Moscow. Thus, any military modernization plans in existence must be based on an assumption of continued Soviet military aid and the Kremlin's willingness to respond to Vietnamese requirements for major end items, spare parts, training packages, and possible coproduction ventures.

For the foreseeable future, then, Vietnam will be totally dependent on Soviet goodwill to keep its military machine in operation. The vast stores of American armaments taken by the North Vietnamese Army from South Vietnam are gradually becoming useless through lack of spare parts, unfamiliarity with maintenance procedures, and improper storage under tropical conditions. Hanoi cannot afford arms purchases on the world market from developing suppliers such as Brazil and Chile, and does not have the friends who would be willing and able to grant such aid on a concessionary basis. Therefore, the Soviet arms connection is so essential to Hanoi's military force development plans that no matter who controls the VCP Politburo, no slackening of ties with Moscow can be permitted.

Also of great strategic value to Hanoi is the advantage of having a powerful ally, the USSR, to pit against a powerful enemy, China. As long as Hanoi maintains close ties with Moscow, Chinese recourse to a military solution as a means of resolving disputes with Vietnam is inhibited severely and veiled with uncertain consequences for Beijing. It is true that in the 1979 war, Soviet support for Hanoi was confined to rhetorical denunciation of Beijing, some offshore posturing of ships of the Soviet Pacific Fleet, and increased military assistance after the war was over. Nevertheless, similar Kremlin restraint cannot be assumed in any future conflict. The long common border between the Soviet Union and China and the .5 million Soviet troops in 52 divisions along the Chinese frontier give Moscow a wide range of military options with which to respond to any future Chinese invasion of Vietnam. The possibility of such a Soviet response weighing in on the side of Vietnam in the event of any showdown with China gives special value to the relationship between Moscow and Hanoi. It also permits Hanoi to view its situation with composure and to prognosticate its worst case scenario with the relative confidence that, in the case of another conflict with Beijing, it will face considerably less than the full weight of the CPLA.

With such materiel and strategic benefits accruing to Hanoi as a result of its ties with Moscow, it is legitimate to question whether the USSR has permitted itself to become encumbered with an impecunious Southeast Asian ally, to be cut adrift at will; and, from the force development standpoint,

whether the Soviet commitment to provide continuing military aid will remain steadfast. In response, it can be posited that Moscow will provide what defense materiel it can afford to Hanoi as a means of strengthening ties with its Vietnamese ally.

The benefits of this association to the Soviet Union are considerable, and rest, not on the meager commodities Vietnam can provide to its patron, but rather on the strategic advantages enjoyed by Moscow in its growing assertiveness as a global superpower. These advantages are conferred by Soviet access, increasingly unhindered and unconditional, to various air and naval facilities in Indochina. With this access, the Soviet Pacific Fleet, numbering over 800 vessels, which for decades had been constrained in its activities by home ports far in the Northwestern Pacific, now has acquired major warm water anchorages in the South China Sea. Such facilities shorten the supply line from Vladivostok, expedite replenishment at sea, reduce fuel consumption, save wear and tear on ship engines, and extend the core life of reactors on nuclear submarines. Vietnamese port facilities also permit the ships to remain at sea longer since they do not have to return as often to their ports in the Soviet Far East for refitting.

The most important facility to Soviet interests in Vietnam is the former US installation at Cam Ranh Bay. Since May 1979, when the first Soviet submarine was spotted using the site, Soviet use of Cam Ranh has increased steadily and facilities have been upgraded. At the present time, according to CINCPAC sources, there are 20 to 22 Soviet warships or auxiliary vessels transiting Cam Ranh Bay on a given day.<sup>23</sup> Offshore facilities include diving and submarine tenders, a hospital ship, two floating piers, and various ocean-going and harbor tugs for the towing of Soviet vessels that call at the site.<sup>24</sup> Onshore facilities include shelter for nuclear submarines, underground fuel-storage tanks, navigational aids, barracks, and an electronic intelligence (ELINT) monitoring station. Aircraft assets at the site now comprise nine Tu-16/BADGERs--five are BADGER-G models equipped to carry the AS-6 KINGFISH antisubmarine missile and intended to play an ASW role; four are BADGER-D maritime surveillance aircraft. There are also two Tu-95/BEAR-Ds for reconnaissance flights and two Tu-95/BEAR-Fs to fulfill ASW functions. According to Chinese sources, there are also some 36 vertical-takeoff-landing (VTOL) Yak-36MP/FORGERs to be used as backup aircraft for the carrier Minsk, and there has been a recent squadron deployment of Tu-22/BLINDER strategic, supersonic bombers.<sup>25</sup>

Soviet aircraft from Cam Rahn Bay generally fly maritime patrols in an arc extending from the Bashi Channel (between Taiwan and the Philippines) in the north, to the Natuna Islands (Indonesia) in the south. Flying such a route permits the Soviets to monitor seagoing traffic on the way to Japan, ship movements and radio communications from the US 7th Fleet Headquarters at Subic Bay, and all maritime activity and communications along the southern coast of China, including Hainan Island. Intelligence collected on these flights is probably analyzed at the Cam Ranh ELINT facility and then transmitted to Soviet Pacific Fleet Headquarters in Vladivostok. Beyond air surveillance activities, the airfield at Cam Ranh Bay in the future could be used as a refuelling point for Soviet BACKFIRE bombers on training, or in a worst case scenario, for tactical missions against the US 7th Fleet.

In a wartime scenario, access to Cam Ranh Bay would give the Soviets a chance to interdict seagoing traffic both before it enters and after it exits the Straits of Malacca. From Cam Ranh, shipping can be attacked as it transits the South China Sea on the way to Japan. From alternate facilities in Kampuchea, including a new airfield near Kompong Som, Soviet combat aircraft flying southwest can pounce on vessels as they enter the funnel-like approach to the Strait of Malacca.<sup>26</sup>

On a hemispheric scale, Soviet military access to sites in Southeast Asia complements the availability of similar facilities such as Socotra, Aden, and Perim Island in the Indian Ocean, and the Dahlak Archipelago in the Red Sea. Strategically, this means that the USSR can now dispute the passage of all shipping, including supertankers from the Persian Gulf, at both ends of the Indian Ocean through such vital chokepoints as the Strait of Bab-el Mandeb in the west and the Strait of Malacca in the east. Since 65 percent of Japan's oil and much of Western Europe's comes from the Persian Gulf and must transit these vital waterways, it can be concluded that the considerable Soviet naval presence in Vietnam forms the eastern lynchpin for a hemispheric strategy that could have serious consequences for the West in case of conflict with the USSR. The facilities that Vietnam has granted to the Soviet Union have now become almost indispensable, and it is likely that Moscow would not willingly relinquish them in response to a simple change of direction in Hanoi's foreign policy.

c. Regional and Domestic Concerns

There are other dynamics closer to home that have implications for Vietnam's military force development. One of these has been the historical Vietnamese desire to exercise regional dominance over Indochina. When Vietnam finally achieved unity under Gia Long in 1802, for example, it turned its energy to rivaling Siam for control of Kampuchea. This policy continued until French rule over both Vietnam and Kampuchea, when the colonial era put a temporary stop to Vietnamese expansionism. However, after three decades of war in the postindependence era and barely 18 months after the forced assimilation of South Vietnam, the world witnessed a resurgence of Vietnamese expansionism when Hanoi's troops moved into Kampuchea. Since the December 1978 invasion, Hanoi has established a compliant puppet regime in Phnom Penh, with whom it signed a Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation in February 1979, and now maintains an occupation force of about 160,000 personnel in the country.

In modern times, Vietnam also has sought repeatedly to bring Laos under its sphere of influence. During the First Indochina War, Viet Minh troops invaded Laos and established a puppet regime in the northeastern part of the country.<sup>27</sup> After the Geneva Conference in 1954, the Viet Minh regrouped to the Laotian border provinces of Phong Saly and Sam Neua, where they remained ensconced. During the Second Indochina War, North Vietnam encroached on Laotian territory with the establishment of the Ho Chi Minh Trail. Since the fall of Saigon, Vietnamese troops have remained in Laos where their occupation force now numbers about 50,000 to 60,000. (See figure 3 for SRV military deployments in Laos.) In mid-1977, ties between Vietnam and Laos reached a new level of intimacy when the two states signed a 25-year Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation. With Vietnam very much the senior partner, the pact was intended to "strengthen the privileged links between two countries in all fields"<sup>28</sup> and to pave the way for military assistance to

Laos, while cementing a relationship that Laotian sources characterized as "special and rare in the world."<sup>29</sup>

Vientiane Province	-	324th Division 335th Division
Route number 13 (possibly between Vientiane and Thakhek)	-	176th Regiment
Khammouane (Thakhek)	-	336th Division
Saravane	-	325th Division
Savannakhet	-	968th Division

Figure 3. SRV Military Deployments in Laos (1984).

[SOURCE: Richard Sola, "Le Syndrome Indochinois," Defense Nationale, April 1984, p. 81.]

Vietnam also must look to its military requirements for internal security. First, it must maintain its territorial integrity in the face of uncertain loyalty of its vanquished foe, South Vietnam, now forcibly integrated in a polity dominated by Hanoi. Second, it must maintain internal security in the mountainous Central Highlands where there are unconfirmed but persistent hints of unrest among ethnic minorities who have long been distrustful of lowland Vietnamese, whatever their political ideology. Third, it must ensure the control of its borders both to prevent such low-intensity threats as incursions by Laotian or Khmer guerrillas, and, as a totalitarian state, to keep its people from fleeing, as in the case of the boat people.

#### 4. NATIONAL DEFENSE CONCEPTS

##### a. "People's War, People's Army"

The overall defense concept underpinning military force development in Vietnam is the involvement of the whole population in any war effort. This total mobilization is embodied in the phrase "people's war, people's army," first enunciated by General Vo Nguyen Giap and set forth in the book of the same title around 1961. The concept is admirably suited for defensive warfare since the protection or salvation of the homeland can be invoked to galvanize the masses for nationwide struggle. It has lost none of its orthodoxy since the days of General Giap and was reaffirmed more recently at the Fifth Party Congress when VCP leaders declared that the nation had to "build the People's Armed Force in accordance with viewpoints of the people's war and the all-people national defense system" (italics added).<sup>30</sup> This concept is at considerable variance with post-World War II military thought in the West where the waging of war has been left to the military professionals with little participation by the civilian population. In Vietnam, total mobilization of the inhabitants in conflicts against the French, the Americans, and the Chinese was a military imperative dictated by the inferiority of the people's armed forces vis-a-vis a strong enemy. The

strategy succeeded and concurrently became an article of SRV revolutionary dogma. It has now given Vietnam, in spite of its poverty and dire economic straits, one of the strongest armed forces in the world, and has conferred upon it a reputation as the leading military power in the region, while earning for Hanoi the grudging military respect of its former foes. Internally, invocation of total mobilization, whether in time of real or imagined threat, also has served the regime well in diverting popular attention from pressing economic concerns and from the need for a competent managerial effort to rehabilitate the nation after 30 years of war.

The concept of total mobilization has been so successful in keeping Vietnam's enemies at bay and in preserving the entrenched position of Hanoi's gerontocratic leadership, that little deviation from it can be expected in the near future. While the immediacy of a second Chinese invasion may have receded, there has been little demobilization and Vietnam continues to invoke the Chinese threat as the rationale for keeping virtually the entire nation under arms. In 1982, one out of every three Vietnamese males was in some type of military force, and even then, the armed forces continued to grow.<sup>31</sup> This trend is not likely to be reversed in the near future, although some levelling off may take place if the Chinese menace as perceived by Hanoi grows no worse. The VCP leadership must place continued reliance on total mobilization or "people's war, people's army," because this is the cheapest way to maintain a high manpower level in the armed forces. Part-time militia, reserve, local or regional force units, indoctrinated with the concepts of total mobilization, and duty to both work and fight, present their country with a double advantage: they earn their keep, and they lend added backbone to the defense posture of the nation.

#### **b. Soviet Military Doctrine**

Another phenomenon that probably will bear on Vietnam's force development is its growing acceptance of Soviet military doctrine. This hypothesis rests on the circumstantial evidence offered by three occurrences. First, the most influential military member of the Politburo, Defense Minister General Van Tien Dung, has been to the USSR recurrently; he has observed the Red Army on maneuvers and assuredly has been exposed to high-level discussions on Soviet military thought. It would be logical to conclude that he might apply Soviet innovations he has witnessed to the VPA. This would be consistent with his dedication to military professionalism and his emphasis on the study of military science. The second occurrence is the presence of several thousand Soviet military advisers in Vietnam. Most of these advisers are engaged in logistical and technical functions associated with the Kremlin's large-scale military assistance program. A small but undetermined number of Red Army officers probably also are serving as faculty advisers or instructors in the VPA's intermediate and senior service schools where they could present Soviet doctrine. Third, it is likely that because of the close defense cooperation between Moscow and Hanoi, a number of VPA field grade and general officers have begun studying in Soviet military educational institutions. Such officers are likely to return home with an understanding of Soviet military doctrine and a readiness to apply it to Vietnam's situation.

Exposure to Soviet military thought coupled with the strategic imperative of standing up to China may induce the Vietnamese military leadership to be receptive to the defense doctrine of the Red Army and to apply it to VPA force development. This means that in the future, the Vietnamese Armed Forces may find themselves indoctrinated in the Soviet premise that the purpose of defense is to halt the offensive of a superior enemy force, to inflict severe losses, to secure critical terrain and location, and to create favorable conditions for assumption of the offensive by friendly forces.<sup>32</sup> At the same time, the VPA may find itself animated by the Soviet concept of oborona ("active defense") in which the friendly forces strike hard at the enemy in a defensive situation and do not restrict themselves to fending off the adversary's blow.<sup>33</sup> To accomplish this, the VPA could adopt such specific Red Army defensive measures as the employment of "fire sacks" and the echelonnement of forces. "Firesacks" are preplanned killing zones established prior to a battle by the careful, deliberate deployment of friendly units, rather than by maneuver after the battle has been joined. Destruction of the enemy is then achieved by sudden, overwhelming massed firepower rather than by counter-attack.<sup>34</sup> In the echelonnement of forces in the Soviet defense, most combat and firepower is concentrated in the first echelon, while most armor is massed in the second echelon to provide for a mobile counterattack.<sup>35</sup>

If Soviet defensive doctrine finds acceptance in the VPA, it can be expected that Vietnamese military theoreticians will make certain that it is incorporated without derogation to the concept of "people's war, people's army," and without compromise of Hanoi's overall military strategy. In other words, what may evolve is a syncretic blend of the experiences and doctrine of both the Red Army and the Vietnamese People's Army to guide Vietnam's force development policies into the 1990s.

## **5. FORCE DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES**

### **a. Standing Army and Reserves**

In adhering to "people's war, people's army" doctrine as the underpinning of its military structure, it is possible that the VPA will implement a force development strategy in accordance with the following principles:

- reliance on a standing army and reserves,
- shift away from guerrilla troops, and
- development of a combined-arms team.

The first principle will be an institutional commitment of reliance on a regular standing army, supplemented by reserves, paramilitary forces, irregulars, and part-time volunteers of various types. The need for such a balanced modern force was initially articulated by General Giap around 1975:

At present and in the near future, we must continue to build the Vietnam People's Army into a modern, regular socialist army, composed of a regular force and regional forces, with a standing force of adequate size and high fighting capabilities, and a large, well-organized well-trained reserve force.<sup>36</sup>

Uttered before the fall of Saigon and before the Chinese punitive invasion, Giap's words turned out to be prophetic when they were ratified by the Fifth Party Congress, which noted that in facing the threat from China:

We must maintain a standing army with a necessary numerical strength, powerful enough to serve as a nucleus for the entire people to actively and successfully cope with all situations in the face of an enemy having a large army and sharing a common border with us.<sup>37</sup>

The Congress further recognized that the SRV's defense units:

Consist of main-force troops and local troops as well as standing and reserve forces with a well-balanced and uniform structure, with a necessary numerical strength, and with an ever-improving quality. Utmost attention must be given to building strong militia and self-defense forces.<sup>38</sup>

**b. Shift from Guerrilla Forces**

The recognition by the VCP that the best defense for Vietnam is a standing army backed by abundant reserves and various militias leads to the second principle--the premise that the standing army will shift away from development as a guerrilla force with its ad hoc logistics and communications, motley collection of arms, sporadic engagements, and limited tactical objectives, to a conventional force with a stable institutional structure. The compelling reason for this change of direction in VPA force development is the different mission which geopolitical circumstances have imposed upon the Vietnamese defense establishment since 1975. Since the fall of Saigon, the principal task of the VPA has shifted from subverting or conquering other countries by armed strength to defending its newly acquired domains. This requires the Vietnamese Armed Forces to carry out garrison duties and counter-guerrilla operations in Laos, Kampuchea, the Central Highlands, and possibly the Mekong Delta, while concurrently attending to the most important task of defending the homeland against a Chinese attack from the north.

To accomplish these new missions, the VPA needs to raise, equip, and deploy main force military units able to play two disparate roles. For garrison and counterinsurgency duties, some units will need to function as light infantry able to work with their Laotian and Kampuchean allies and to respond to the overall pacification policies dictated by Hanoi. Such a light infantry force should be able to maneuver in small formations and operate relatively independently.

For the primary mission of defending the heartland of Vietnam from Chinese aggression, however, the VPA will need a conventional army of heavily armed, mutually supporting units that will stand and fight in the limited maneuvering room of the Red River Delta. To do this, these units must develop two fighting qualities unrelentingly. First, they must develop "stunning power," that is, the shock action and firepower to blunt, stop, and then repel a Chinese offensive of any configuration or magnitude designated by Beijing.

Second, they must concurrently develop "staying power," that is, the endurance to absorb heavy losses while maintaining unit cohesion and staying in contact with the enemy to inflict damaging blows of their own. Developing such fighting qualities is especially necessary because one assumes that the VCP leadership is under no illusion that a future conflict with China will be fought under the same rules of engagement that constrained the Americans and South Vietnamese. Hanoi, for example, is aware that the VPA will enjoy no territorial safehavens immune from enemy attack if it confronts the CPLA. The VPA leadership also is aware that its formations will not have the luxury of initiating battalion/regimental engagements, thereafter to break contact after a reversal, and retire unpursued to lick their wounds and rebuild their fighting strength. In a contest between the VPA and the CPLA, victory will go to the side that can both endure and inflict heavy losses on the enemy until the opposing force is neutralized.

c. Combined-Arms Team

To build an armed force of maximum "stunning and staying power," probably will lead the VPA to its third development principle--the adoption of a combined-arms approach. In modern tactics, it is unquestionably the combined-arms team of infantry with its maneuverability, artillery with its firepower, and armor with its shock action that has the best chance of prevailing on a conventional battlefield. In the case of Vietnam, such a combined-arms structure may best be represented in the mobile main force army corps. It is on these multi-division maneuver formations that the task of destroying the columns of a Chinese invader would ultimately fall.

VPA adherence to the above three principles should not imply that the future role of the local armed forces will be de-emphasized in the Vietnamese military establishment. On the contrary, as explained previously, there are ideological and economic reasons to maintain such forces, especially in a defensive situation. There is also a sound strategic reason for such units, as conceded by General Van Tien Dung after the Sino-Vietnamese War. General Dung noted that to defeat an enemy "we must use . . . a combination of several fighting methods, of which the local people's war and the war fought by mobile main force army corps are considered to be the two most basic strategic fighting methods."<sup>39</sup> This does not mean, however, that the main and local forces of the VPA will share the same or interchangeable missions. On the contrary, it is likely that the mission of the two forces will be quite different. The task of the main force units will be to annihilate the enemy; that of the local force units to fix the enemy, delay his advance, break up his formations, force him to deploy prematurely, and make him subject to defeat in detail.

6. DEPLOYMENT TRENDS AND TACTICS

a. Strategic and Static Defense

The reliance on the main and local forces as the twin bulwarks of the VPA also hints at the strategy and tactics that will be adopted to safeguard the nation. As long as China is the enemy, it can be expected that Vietnam will pursue a policy of strategic defense. In other words, even if faced with the imminence of a renewed Chinese invasion, Vietnam probably will not attack

across the border. Subsequent to an outbreak of hostilities, Hanoi probably would confine its cross-border ripostes to small, local, spoiling attacks. Vietnam does not have the military personnel and resources to sustain a cross-border offensive against its giant neighbor, and if such an operation were attempted, it would quickly run out of momentum. In addition, Hanoi would also confront the uncertainty of any Kremlin endorsement for such an undertaking at precisely the time the VPA would be most dependent on Soviet armaments for the success of the operation.

It can be anticipated that Vietnam, faced with the necessity of staying on the defensive strategically, will opt for a policy of static rather than mobile defense. The most compelling reason for such a posture is geographic. The mountains of the Viet Bac in the northeast and the Tay Bac in the northwest impose a natural barrier between the Sino-Vietnamese border and the heartland of Vietnam to be protected at all costs, the Red River Delta. It can be further postulated that the defense of this zone will be entrusted principally to local and regional force units. Such forces would be more familiar with the mountainous terrain and, in accordance with current VPA doctrine, would have the time to prepare concealed fighting positions, such as bunkers, caves, and tunnels, to delay any enemy advance. Lightly armed local forces, however, probably would be augmented by specialized main force units to increase their firepower. Such main force units conjecturally could be of three types:

- antitank,
- mountain artillery, and
- economic construction.

Antitank units would give local and regional forces bearing the brunt of any enemy attack in the mountain areas an antiarmor capability beyond what is available organically to these forces. Such units, or individual weapons, might be deployed piecemeal among several defense sectors, or massed along likely avenues of approach, such as the route from Lang Son. Their mission would be to delay and decimate enemy tanks and self-propelled artillery before the adversary reached the fringes of the Red River Delta.

Artillery units would be useful in slowing an enemy advance in any terrain. However, in mountainous areas, free movement of the batteries might be impeded. VPA artillery assets assigned to the regions between the Red River Delta and the Sino-Vietnamese border probably would be of the lighter, mountain-artillery type (75 mm to 105 mm) that could displace more rapidly. Alternatively, heavier pieces (105 mm and above) would be employed in more semipermanent positions, with the guns registered to deliver massed firepower on likely areas of enemy concentration. Such heavier artillery pieces probably would be emplaced no closer to the border than the maximum firing range, and perhaps considerably farther back to prevent their falling into enemy hands in a tactically fluid situation. No matter where the VPA emplaces its heavier artillery in the mountains, each battery would have plans for its own retrograde movement or withdrawal to alternate firing positions.

If the added weight of more infantry is needed to augment the local and regional forces in the mountainous regions, it is possible that such reinforcements would consist of economic construction divisions. These units

have been in existence officially since 1966. They are composed of regular troops that are fully trained and armed, and reportedly they are subordinate to their own directorate in the Ministry of Defense. They have specific military missions; however, they are also entrusted with economic tasks such as food production or construction work. They are composed partially of older veterans, many of whom saw combat in South Vietnam. The economic construction divisions acquitted themselves competently in the fighting against China in 1979, and many of these units have remained stationed in the Viet Bac and Tay Bac regions.<sup>40</sup> Deployment of these units in the mountainous terrain around the Red River Delta would make sense to the Hanoi leadership. Tactically, it would place main force troops in augmentation of local forces on territory that must be defended tenaciously; economically, it would deploy these troops on a cost-effective basis, since they would be expected to pull their own weight financially by engaging in productive work.

b. Invasion Scenarios

While the VPA may place heavy reliance on augmented regional and local forces to inflict maximum damage on an enemy by fighting, in accordance with a policy of static defense, the mission of irreversibly defeating an adversary will fall on the highly trained, well-armed, regular main force units. For these units to perform their mission, the military leadership in Hanoi, as part of its force development options, must decide where to place them to block a prospective enemy advance. Such deployments in turn would be in response to various tactical scenarios representing Hanoi's best guess of how China would launch a future offensive against Vietnam.

In assessing the Chinese threat to their country, Vietnamese spokesmen have posited a number of invasion scenarios that could be adopted by Beijing in any future conflict. In the first scenario, the CPLA would move southeast through Laos and then veer east into Vietnam's Nghe Tinh (in the vicinity of Vinh) Province, dividing the country north of the demarcation line imposed by the Geneva Conference of 1954. In the second scenario, China would attack from the northwest through Laos and drive to the sea on a Hanoi-to-Haiphong axis. In the third scenario, the CPLA would attack along the coast west into Quang Ninh Province.<sup>41</sup> Another scenario would be a three-pronged Chinese attack:

- through Lao Cay, following the Red River as an axis of advance,
- through Dong Dang and Lang Son southwest to Hanoi, and
- through Mon Cai southwest to Hon Gai and Haiphong.<sup>42</sup>

All of these scenarios might be accompanied by small-scale, diversionary amphibious assaults in areas with suitable landing beaches. (See figure 4 for Vietnamese estimate of axis of possible Chinese attacks.)

In spite of the apparent logic of the above scenarios, there are several that can be discounted as major avenues of approach for a large military force. Among them, it will be noted that a major attack through Laos is militarily unsound. To carry out such a thrust, the PLA would have to follow a long circuitous route in China, then cut across trackless, fog-shrouded mountains in Laos and the Tay Bac region in northern Vietnam before emerging on the western fringe of the Red River Delta. Should an invasion force

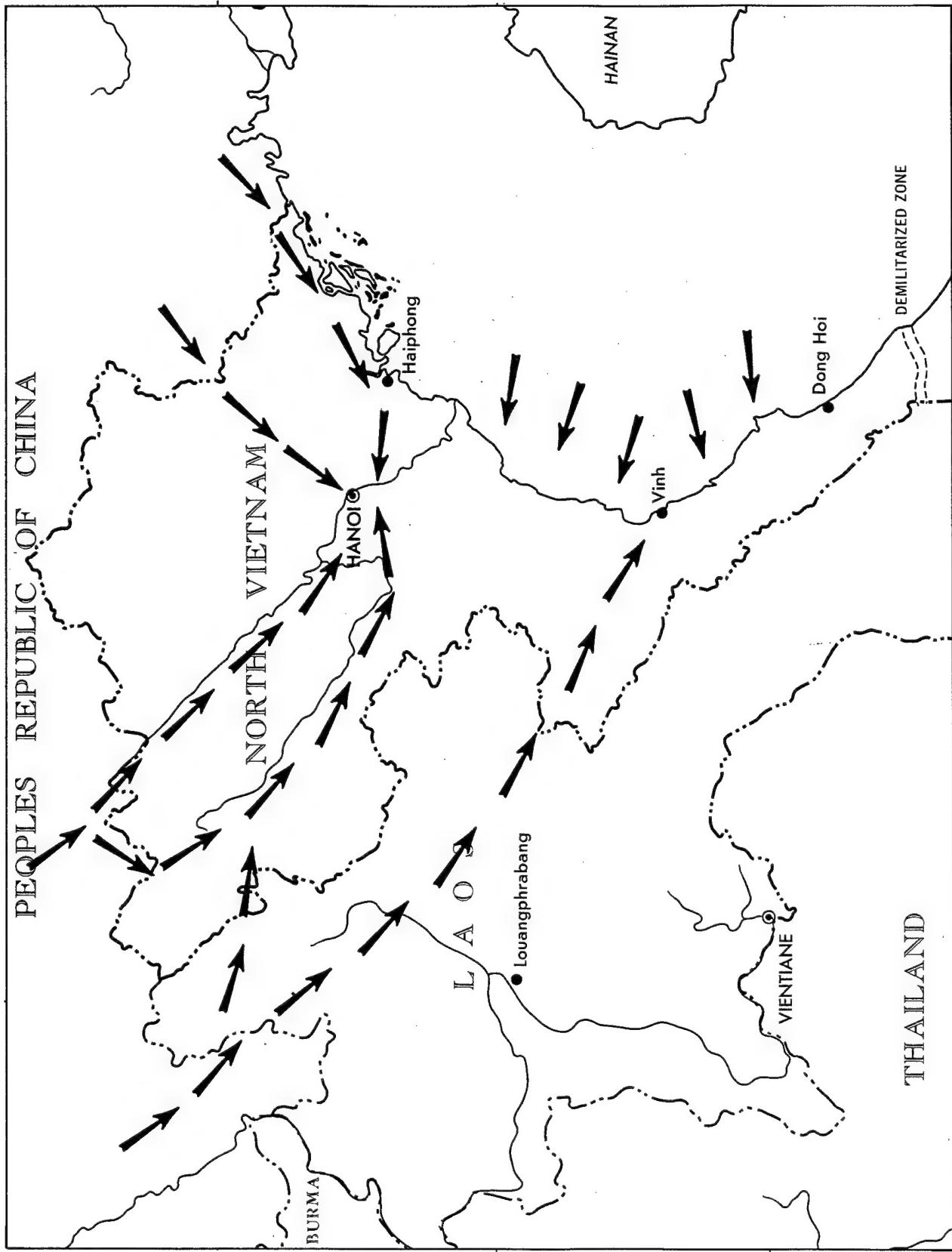


Figure 4. Vietnamese Estimate of Axis of Possible Chinese Attacks

advance from this direction, it would soon lose its momentum in the mountains and so extend itself that it would lose the tactical initiative long before it approached the Red River Delta. A second thrust from the direction of Mon Cai to Hon Gai and Haiphong similarly would be impractical. An invasion force proceeding along this route would have its freedom of movement severely restricted by the seacoast on its southern flank, and could find itself pinned against the shoreline by the defending forces occupying the high ground just inland.<sup>43</sup> A third scenario that can be discounted is the possibility of a Chinese amphibious assault in the vicinity of Vinh along the coastal strip of central Vietnam. Such a move by Beijing will remain implausible in the near term, because China does not have the sealift capability to put ashore, or keep supplied, the large force that would be needed to fight its way north against the VPA.

If China were to attack Vietnam with the intent, in a worst case scenario, of capturing Hanoi and occupying the Red River Delta, there are a limited number of approaches that can be used from the Sino-Vietnamese border. Considered from east to west, there are four salient routes:

- from the Friendship Gate/Pass through Dong Dang and Lang Son to Bac Ninh;
- from the border of Cao Bang Province to the vicinity of Cao Bang city, then south along Routes number 3 or number 4 in the direction of Thai Nguyen;
- from Lao Cai on the border, southeast following the basin of the Red (Hong) River in the direction of Yen Bai. In this area, a secondary axis of advance is possible down Route number 2 from Ha Giang to south; and
- from the vicinity of Lai Chau southeast along Route number 6 to Son La along the ridges paralleling the Black (Da) River in the direction of Hoa Binh. This route would be of less tactical importance than the first three because of the long expanse of inhospitable terrain to be crossed.

These routes were among those used during the 1979 Sino-Vietnamese Border War, and their strategic worth is recognized by both sides. The Chinese can scarcely feint elsewhere, because there are few suitable alternate approaches that would give such attempted deceptions any credibility. The Vietnamese surely are aware of these limited Chinese tactical options, and for their part can reasonably estimate from what direction a Chinese invasion would come. Whether such foreknowledge would compensate for tactical disadvantages the Vietnamese themselves must confront is a moot point. The mountainous terrain would inhibit the maneuverability of the VPA itself, as it would the CPLA, and the limited areas of the Red River Delta would sharply restrict the ability of the Vietnamese Army to fight a defensive war of movement.

c. Main Force Deployments

With the opportunity for deception and maneuver by either side constrained by the terrain and geography of northern Vietnam, the VPA General Staff may position its main forces according to the following guidelines:

- Main force units generally would be concentrated well away from the border. To do otherwise would deny these forces tactical flexibility. They would be engaged immediately after the border was breached, well away from the Red River Delta, the region they should be protecting, and perhaps well before the main enemy axis of advance was determined.
- To obviate such a situation, the military leadership in Hanoi could deploy its regular main force units around the fringes of the Red River Delta, where they can protect the nation's heartland in a mutually supporting, interlocking defense system; where they can stand back temporarily and assess the main direction of the enemy attack; and where the VPA General Staff or theater headquarters can have the flexibility to shift uncommitted units to threatened sectors. The estimated deployment of Vietnam's 50-odd infantry divisions (38 main force and 13 economic construction units) since 1979 is indicated in figure 5. These divisional locations may be imprecise or randomly shown.

An alternate view is that the VPA, at present or in the future, may cluster its main force units around the following urban areas which also serve as hubs for the transportation network of the region as shown in figure 6:

- Bac Gian (Phu Lang Thuong): this sector covers the approach to the Red River Delta from Lang Son. It sits astride a main route (number 1A) to Hanoi. It is also the hub for roads running west from the Chinese border through Quang Ninh Province. From this area, troops can be shifted by road northwest to Thai Nguyen, site of another approach, or east to Pha Lao to head off any diversionary Chinese thrust along the coast. There are airfields for resupply at Kep and Bac Giang.
- Thai Nguyen: this sector covers the approach from Cao Bang down Routes number 3 and number 4. From this area, troops also can be shifted by road west to Tuyen Quang and south to Bac Giang. Thai Nguyen has an airfield and sits astride a rail line and a principal route (number 3) to Hanoi.
- Phu Tho: this sector covers the approach down the Red (Hong) River which runs along a geological fault directly from the Chinese border to Hanoi. From Phu Tho, troops also can be diverted north to Tuyen Quang to meet the contingency of a Chinese attack down Route number 2 from Ha Giang or northwest to Yen Bai to blunt an advance down the Red River Valley. Phu Tho has an airfield; it sits astride the railroad line from Hanoi through Yen Bai to the Chinese border and lies at the junction of roads to Yen Bai, Tuyen Quang, and Hanoi.
- Hoa Binh: this sector covers the approach from Lai Chau down Route number 6. This road runs southeast along the mountain ridges and

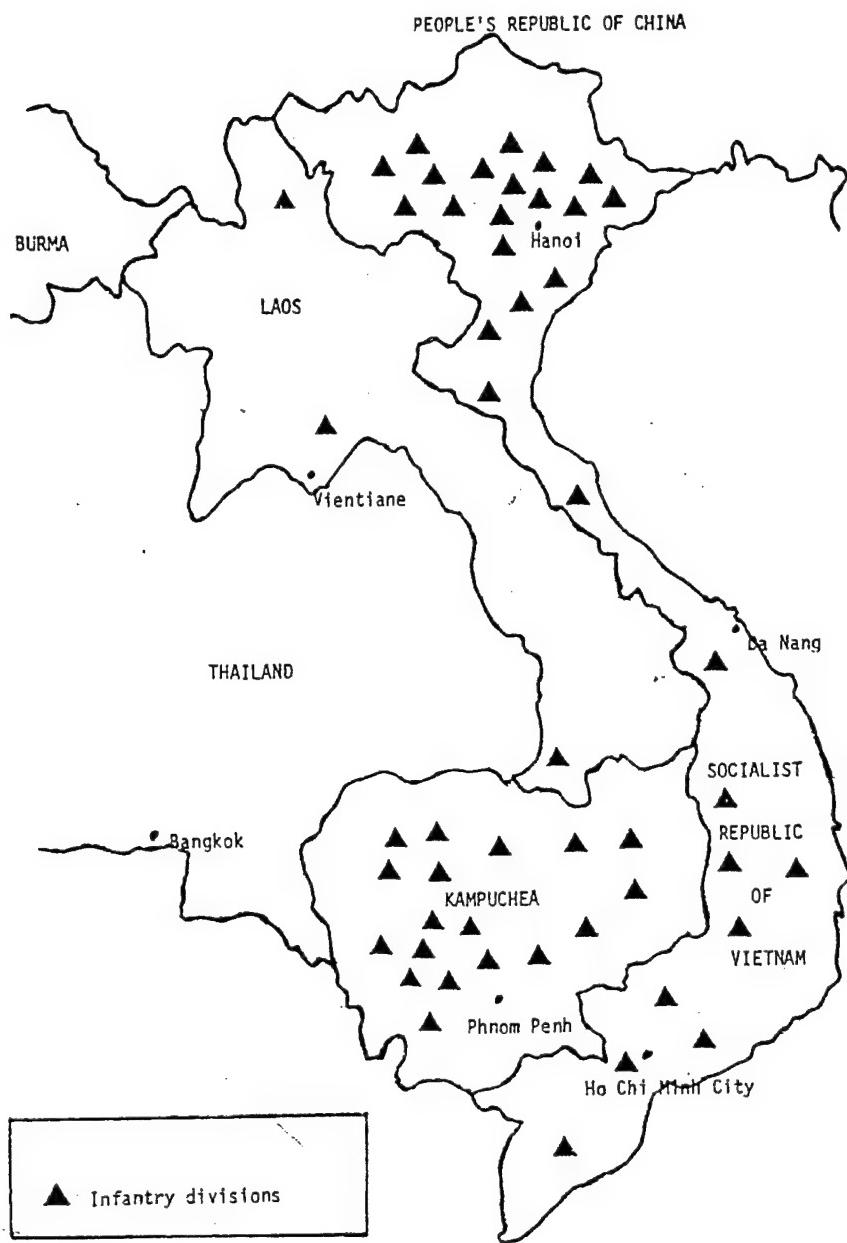


Figure 5. Estimated Deployment of the People's Army of Vietnam

[Source: Daniel F. O'Brien, "Vietnam," in Fighting Armies Nonaligned, Third World, and Other Ground Armies A Combat Assessment, ed. Richard A. Gabriel (Westport, CN and London: Greenwood, 1983), p. 66.]

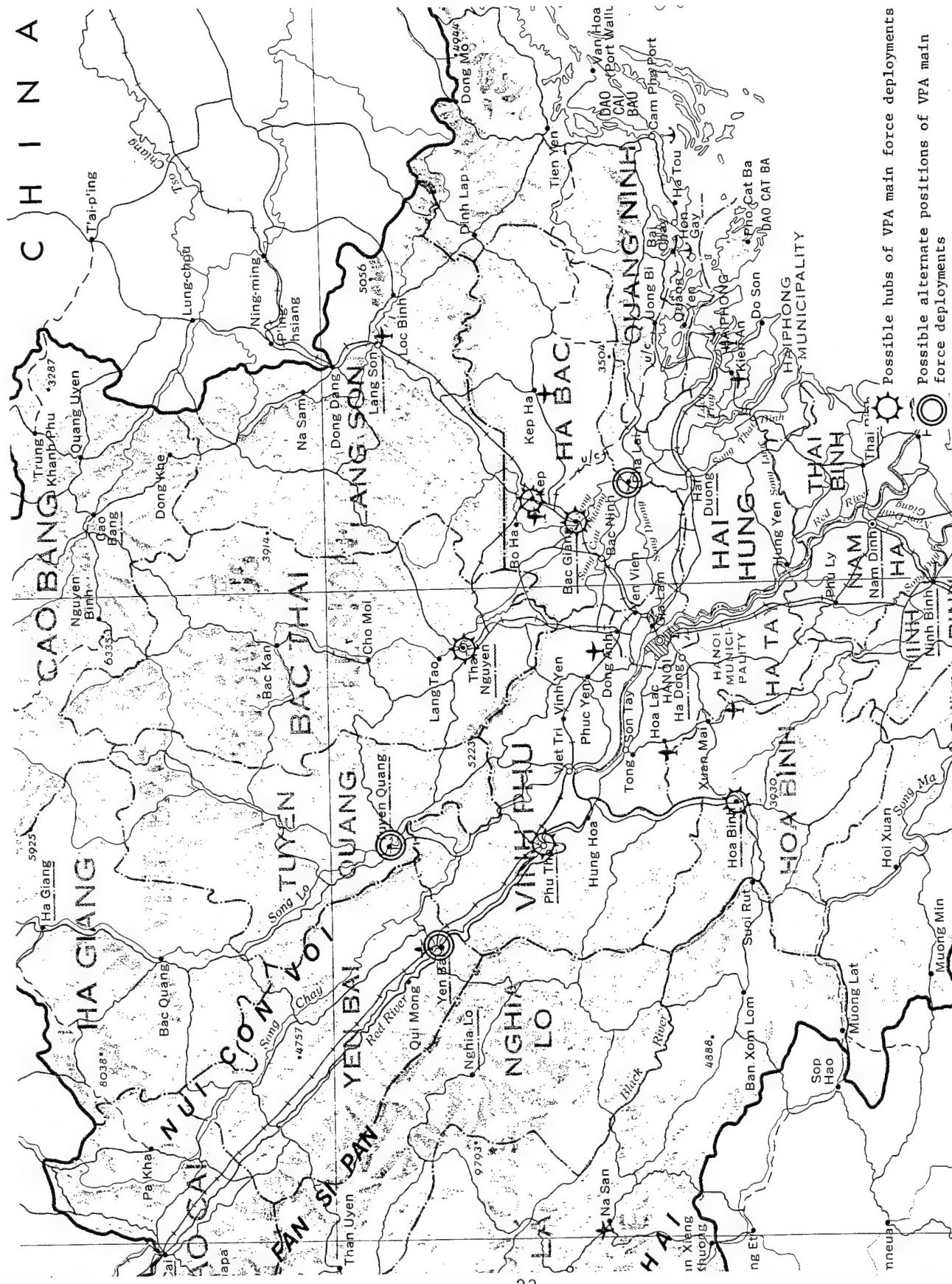


Figure 6. Possible Hub of VPA Deployment

valleys of the Tay Bac region to the Red River Delta. Because it is the only route through the mountains and would channelize an enemy advance, and because it follows a long circuitous course through inhospitable terrain, it probably would not be a major axis of advance. Instead, this sector might be the direction from which a diversionary attack would be launched, possibly to entice defenders out of their presumably well-prepared positions around Hoa Binh.

## **7. COMMAND AND CONTROL**

Vietnam's farflung defenses in the northern region of the country present special problems in command and control. Geographically, the terrain is rugged and communications unreliable; demographically, the population is sparse; ethnologically, the people are different from the lowland Vietnamese. To compound the difficulty in the area, Vietnam has an array of troops--regular and economic construction divisions, regional and local forces, border security units, and a large reserve--all facing a single enemy who could attack simultaneously at a number of points. To respond readily to such a threat, unified command of Hanoi's forces in the frontier region becomes imperative.

In the Vietnamese People's Army, there are presently two types of headquarters immediately above the division level: Military regions (MR) and fighting (military) corps. Military regions have an administrative, training, and area coverage responsibility, but probably no combat functions. MRs 1 to 3 are clustered on the northern frontier. Several MRs may be grouped together in a Military Theater. On a tactical level, all the armed units in several provinces (or MRs) may be grouped together in fighting (military) corps.<sup>44</sup> The fighting corps, in turn, may be clustered together into Military Theaters of Operation (MTOs). These latter headquarters are an innovation that grew out of the Sino-Vietnamese War in response to the need for improved military command and control. The responsibility of each MTO is to prepare contingency plans relating to tactics, troop deployments, and logistics to repel any invasion in its section.<sup>45</sup> On a higher strategic level:

The Military Theater (of Operation) concept welds the three military forces of Communist Indo-China into a single, combined (or joint) command headed by a supreme commander who is able to devise and pursue a co-ordinated strategy against the outside attack, calling on all resources within his area of responsibility, including Laotian and Khmer troops where applicable.<sup>46</sup>

It is presumed that on a joint level, the supreme commander of the unified MTOs would be a colonel general or senior general and would report directly to General Van Tien Dung as the Defense Minister and senior official controlling the forces.

From the force development standpoint, it may be conjectured that it is at the MTO level that VPA would undertake qualitative improvements to enhance military command and control. The MTO is a new and untried echelon of command and probably the one that needs the most attention as regards better communication and coordination with a host of military, party, and government bodies at both lateral and subordinate levels. Most unneeded, by contrast, would be

the imposition of yet another layer of military bureaucracy on a party/government structure that already is highly centralized. Such a move would slow down transmittal of orders and directives from the promulgating agency, such as the Ministry of Defense, and delay implementation of directives by military units in the field.

## 8. FORCE EXPANSION

### a. China as Determinant

Vietnam has between 1 to 1.2 million military personnel on active duty, excluding reserves and paramilitary which may account for an additional 1.5 million.<sup>47</sup> This represents the fourth largest standing armed force in the world and shows an increase of about 35 percent over the 650,000 men under arms in North Vietnam in 1975, after the fall of Saigon. This rapid expansion of the armed forces occurred at a time of great deprivation in Vietnam, and demonstrates Politburo resoluteness in unhesitatingly placing "guns before butter," no matter what the cost, to ensure national security. With this steadfast resolve as the underpinning for any force development plans, it is probable that further military expansion will depend on two factors--the Chinese military threat and demographic constraints.

First, the principal determinant will be Beijing. If the Chinese military threat recedes significantly, there is a better than even chance that Hanoi would follow suit and demobilize some of its forces to ease its economic burden. Even though the VPA operates on an austere budget and Soviet military equipment is free, financial allocations for the armed forces in 1980 (the last year for which figures are available) amounted to 47 percent of state expenditures and 28 percent of national income.<sup>48</sup> This is a heavy encumbrance for a poor nation such as Vietnam that has been at war for over a generation. If there is no change in the situation with China, however, it is possible that Vietnam will maintain its present manpower levels in the armed forces, which already have undergone substantial increases in personnel and armaments since the Sino-Vietnamese war. In the case of a continued stalemate with Beijing, the VCP would be loathe to accept any derogation of its defense preparedness through demobilization. If, on the other hand, Hanoi perceives the Chinese threat as growing, it is likely to display no reluctance in an emergency to summon the entire Vietnamese nation to arms, irrespective of the human or economic cost.

### b. The Demographic Constraint

If there is a VCP proclivity to respond to a heightened foreign threat by a more encompassing call to arms, a second determinant of force expansion would be demography. On the surface, it appears that in this respect Vietnam has little to worry about. Various sources estimate the country's population to be between 52 and 56 million, and increasing at the rate of 2.2 to 2.4 percent annually.<sup>49</sup> This is a very high birth rate, and means that about 500,000 to 600,000 male youths come of age (17 years) for military induction each year.<sup>50</sup> It would seem on the basis of this data that Vietnam would have ample manpower for an unremitting military buildup. However, a glimpse at a single province suggests a different picture. In early 1984, a foreign observer visiting Thai Binh, a coastal province south of Hanoi and Haiphong,

noted that out of a provincial population of 1.5 million, 100,000 men or slightly less than 7 percent of the total population was on military active duty of some sort.<sup>51</sup> On a smaller scale, in a village cooperative of 5,320 people in the same province, 700 male residents were away in the armed forces. This number comprised 50 percent of all adult males and 13 percent of the total population of the cooperative.<sup>52</sup> In spite of this, cooperative members complained that they were spurred on relentlessly (and in vain) to keep up production and meet new and even higher quotas raised arbitrarily by party cadres. If this vignette of one province holds true nationwide, the incessant manpower drain, countenanced by the VCP to keep up the armed forces, can only presage economic stagnation for the nation and continued hardship for the Vietnamese people.

If the VCP can come to grips with this factor, the Hanoi leadership, short of all-out war with China, may strike a compromise between its force development desiderata and the capacity of the nation to sustain them. One plausible concomitant of this compromise may be a shift of emphasis from raising main force infantry divisions, which are expensive, to economic construction units, which are cheaper. This development is already discernible: economic construction units have steadily increased since their creation--from 3 divisions in 1966 to 15 divisions in 1982--with a total strength in excess of 50,000.<sup>53</sup> The compromise involved in this shift would be a tradeoff between the highly trained, heavily armed, full-time professionals of the main force divisions and the smaller, more lightly armed economic construction units. These latter troops would enhance the defense posture of the homeland to a certain extent, while concurrently engaged in useful economic activity that would contribute to nation-building.

A second corollary to this compromise would be an alternate shift of emphasis from main force units to the regional forces or the reserves. The regional forces acquitted themselves competently in the Sino-Vietnamese war, and thus are a proven factor in the defense of their nation. The reserves, however, are a more unknown factor. Their tactical worth in a conflict would depend on such variables as mobilization time and the celerity with which they could be deployed to face the enemy. These variables depend, in turn, on the existence of a reliable communication and transportation network so that the troops can be notified and join their units in a timely fashion. The system works well enough in some smaller developed nations such as Israel and Switzerland. In northern Vietnam, however, which has yet to repair much of the damage to its communication and transportation arteries from US airstrikes a decade ago, and where economic stagnation and poverty have inhibited infrastructure development, the reserves probably could not act in an expeditious manner that would be tactically decisive. Possibly the best that could be expected is that in a short war, the reserves would be mustered in platoons and companies to take over security duties from more seasoned troops who would be rushed to the front. In a hypothetical prolonged war, however, with sufficient time to train and deploy them in large units, they could function as main forces. These calculations probably are familiar to VPA leaders, and a likely course of action along force development lines might be an effort to improve the quality and response time of the reserves rather than seek any increase in personnel.

## **9. MORALE IN FORCE DEVELOPMENT**

### **a. Conditions of Service**

Maintaining morale in the VPA over the years frequently has amounted to little more than turgid exhortations on the need for greater effort, harder work, and unswerving loyalty to the party. Terms of service for active duty and reserve personnel frequently has meant serving for the duration of the conflict without recourse except for death or disability, under conditions ranging from the austere to the abominable.<sup>54</sup>

In recent years, however, a number of measures have been undertaken by the VPA leadership as it goes about gradually transforming a guerrilla army to a modern armed force. These reforms undeniably will have an impact on troop morale as they make military service somewhat more equitable to the average Vietnamese soldier. From the force development standpoint, a major category of reform concerns the conditions of service. A fundamental innovation in this respect has been the new SRV Military Service Law. Promulgated in 1982, it is the first completely new draft law in the nation in 25 years (full text is in appendix B).

The new law reportedly was designed to eliminate past weaknesses in the conscription system and discourage incessant allegations of favoritism in extending draft deferments.<sup>55</sup> It imposes a military obligation generally of 3 years active duty on all able-bodied males in Vietnam. This reduces the length of service from 4 years (as stated in the previous laws of 1958-60), or for the duration of an emergency (as in the war against the United States). Some men in specialized or technical skills are inducted for 4 years. Graduates of post-secondary institutions serve 2 years. The Minister of Defense, in circumstances of undefined necessity, may extend individuals on active duty for a maximum of 6 months beyond their expiration date of service. The draft age is set at 18 to 27 years of age; however, 17-year-olds otherwise qualified may volunteer for military training or active duty. Sole breadwinners and surviving sons are exempted from military service.

Under the new legislation, male youths register for military service during April of the year in which they reach 17 years of age. They then undergo a physical examination. The following year, around their 18th birthday, they are summoned into military service during either of two induction periods: February-March or August-September. The number of inductees countrywide is set by the SRV Council of Ministers. VCP People's Committees and local military commanders act somewhat as municipal draft boards and decide who will be called to active duty to fill local quotas. Orders must be delivered to selected individuals 15 days before they are to report for induction.

The new law also prescribes reserve obligations. Reservists are classified into two categories according to their military experience and into three groups according to their age. Service obligation for reservists continues until the age of 50.

Service members on active duty also are extended certain privileges under the new legislation. They may be assigned living quarters, depending upon availability, or draw a quarters allowance in kind, consisting of cultivable land. They may receive preferential rates when traveling on public conveyances or using the postal services. Dependent families may receive help from local party organizations, while discharged veterans have reemployment rights and preference in job placement.

A separate Military Officers' Law promulgated at the same time as the Military Service Law establishes the conditions of service for commissioned personnel in the VPA (full text is in appendix C). It defines commissioned status and establishes eligibility; enumerates the commissioned ranks and prescribes time in grade for promotion; mandates an officer efficiency report system; sets a compulsory retirement age by rank and reserve category; accords officers who are released from active duty preferential treatment for job placement or admission to educational institutions; and attests to their eligibility for retirement benefits if they have served on active duty for at least 20 years.

With the conditions of service codified into a new law, and less subject to the interpretations or caprices of local party and military officials, it is possible that there will be a positive impact on VPA morale as both officers and enlisted men come to realize precisely where they stand with respect to their military obligations.

#### **b. Quality of Life in the VPA**

Other factors that have an effect on morale among VPA personnel are the living conditions under which soldiers on active duty must subsist. In this respect, there are no indications that the military leadership will take a more benign view of its rank-and-file, and gratuitously act to provide more consumer goods, such as uniforms, shoes, or shelter, or more generous subsistence in kind, such as an increase in food allowances. What is more likely to emerge is a continued emphasis on self-help projects among military units as the best safeguard against penury. Thus, soldiers will be pushed, for example, to fabricate their own simple barracks and office furniture and to tend their vegetable patches and fish ponds. In this endeavor, it may be that the Rear Services Directorate of the VPA General Staff will be called upon to play an expanded role. Such a role would involve making available to personnel basic commodities such as seeds, fertilizer and building materials. In addition, Rear Services may fulfill a coordinating function by insuring an equitable distribution of scarce commodities, perhaps from state factories and cooperatives directly to end-user units.

If an easing of tensions with China were to be accompanied by a diminution of siege-mentality among VCP leaders, VPA troops might possibly spend correspondingly less time on military activities and be granted more time and greater flexibility to support themselves. If the slackening of tensions so permit, the commitment to military self-sufficiency may acquire a new dimension. This new tack could involve the military services setting up their own enterprises, perhaps on the Indonesian or Pakistani model. These military-owned and -operated businesses might sell goods and services for a profit on the open market (or in the case of the VPA, to other state agencies,

cooperatives, and so forth). If they were successful, they would be a source of nonappropriated funds for soldier and dependent welfare, and a source of employment for discharged, disabled, and retired personnel.

## **10. DEFENSE PROCUREMENT AND PRODUCTION**

### **a. More Versus Better**

Force development also involves defense procurement and production, because they determine how the military services are going to be armed and equipped. In Vietnam, the issue of defense procurement and production for the VPA is linked inseparably to the relationship with the USSR, because the Soviet Union is now the sole source of armaments for the Vietnamese Armed Forces. While ties between Hanoi and Moscow will bear no attenuation because of their mutual interests, the price to be paid for the preservation of this relationship, including the armaments to be provided by Moscow, is subject to the negotiating skills of both sides. Vietnam will try to extract the maximum concessions, including weapons, in exchange for the extension of strategic advantages to the USSR. Moscow, in turn, will attempt to keep within bounds the costs it must pay to maintain its influence with Hanoi. Ultimately, the price to be paid to keep the relationship intact will be a compromise between what is desired by Vietnam's force development planners and what the USSR is willing and able to furnish. This compromise, in turn, will reflect the balance struck between several pairs of dichotomous variables.

The first pair of variables that Hanoi and Moscow will need to address is the issue of more versus better equipment. In other words, will it be in Vietnam's interest to acquire larger quantities of less sophisticated armaments that are becoming obsolescent, or lesser amounts of the most advanced, state-of-the-art weaponry? For the Kremlin, provision of top-of-the-line weaponry to Vietnam involves certain tradeoffs that must be taken into consideration in determining military aid levels to Hanoi. For example, if the equipment currently is in production, an increase in the number of items manufactured to accommodate Vietnamese desires lowers the unit cost to all Warsaw Pact countries. Conversely, if Soviet defense production lines already are operating at full capacity, diversion of part of the output to Vietnam can only derogate from Warsaw Pact requirements.

The principle advantage to the Kremlin of providing less sophisticated, obsolescent weapons to Vietnam is economic. Large inventories of such armaments already are on hand, and more will become available for redistribution as older materiel is phased out and replaced by more modern weaponry in the Soviet and satellite armies of Eastern Europe. The Soviet Union is then in a position to make substantial arms transfers to Vietnam at costs that are affordable to the Kremlin. The unknown factor is to what extent Hanoi would be willing to settle for secondhand, obsolescent weaponry.

Beyond economic considerations, there is a political dimension to the question of furnishing of any type of arms to Hanoi. A tilt in the direction of armaments incorporating the latest technology would cause greater Vietnamese dependence on the USSR for such support services as training packages and spare parts. On the other hand, a reliance on less sophisticated weaponry would lessen Vietnamese dependence on the USSR, since sources of

supply are more likely to be varied, and VPA technicians are more likely to be familiar with the maintenance and repair of such equipment.

**b. End Items Versus Spare Parts**

A second pair of variables relates to end items versus spare parts. Defense resources in every country being finite, Hanoi and Moscow must decide, because of cost considerations, whether emphasis will be placed on maintaining large stocks of combat ready end items and correspondingly fewer spare parts, or large and complete inventories of spare parts with correspondingly fewer end items. The principal determinant in this dichotomy is the perception of force development planners whether the nation will be called on to fight a short or long war. If it is a short, intense war, immediate superiority in combat-ready materiel (that is, end items) is paramount to overwhelm the enemy at the outset. If it is a long, drawn-out war of attrition, large, well-stocked depots of spare parts are a requisite because armaments superiority will go, not to the army that has the most weaponry at the outset, but to the side that can cut its losses by quickly repairing and restoring its damaged equipment to combat serviceability. In the case of Vietnam, it is possible that VPA force development planners, envisioning the situation with China, would conclude that the most likely scenario would involve a relatively short defensive war, and would consequently opt for as large a quantity of combat-ready equipment that their armed forces could absorb. This equipment possibly would be deployed in the vicinity of the strategic hubs described previously.

Irrespective of whether the military leadership in Hanoi tilts in favor of end items or spare parts, however, the choice for Vietnam is rendered more unequivocal because, once made, it is not easily remediable. Sheer distance between the Soviet Union and Vietnam makes any logistical miscalculation extremely difficult to correct. The supply line between the two allies must cross nearly half the globe. Originating in the manufacturing heartland of the USSR, it leads to Baltic or Black Sea ports, then through the Suez Canal or around the Cape of Good Hope, across a stormy Indian Ocean, and through the territorial waters of ASEAN states before terminating at Haiphong, northern Vietnam's most important port. Alternatively, armaments and supplies destined for Vietnam must cross an entire continent on the Trans-Siberian Railroad to Soviet Far Eastern ports such as Vladivostok, then be transshipped to ocean-going vessels for the trip to Haiphong. Faced with the reality of this tenuous logistical route and the difficulty of resupply, VPA leaders should encounter little difficulty in facing the conclusion that if they fight a short intense conflict with China, it is likely to be with whatever they have on hand.

**c. Procurement Versus Production**

The third variable is the question of defense procurement versus defense production. Are the interests of either side better served by meeting Hanoi's war materiel requirements through procurement measures exclusively, or does it make sense to initiate a defense industry in Vietnam? For both sides, it is a tradeoff. For Moscow, maximum leverage is maintained more easily over Hanoi if Vietnam develops no defense production capability and is compelled to obtain all its war materiel from the USSR. However, this political advantage has a considerable financial cost that must be borne by the hardpressed Soviet

economy. Conversely the growth of a defense industry for Hanoi would foster greater independence from Soviet military aid. However, it would be a heavy burden on Vietnam's tottering infrastructure, and would detract further from scarce manpower and resources that the SRV can ill afford to divert to such economic unproductivity as arms manufacturing.

Fortunately for both Moscow and Hanoi, the choices regarding procurement or production may not be as stark as they appear, because implementation of a defense industry is a matter of degree. Defense production covers a gamut of industries and manufactured items encompassing a wide range of technology, capital costs, and resource expenditures. It is possible to have a defense industry that is confined to the filling of cartridges and spent artillery casings. It is equally possible to have a defense industry that manufactures jet engines and experiments with lasers. In the case of Vietnam, it is likely that the USSR probably would assist in establishing a modest, low-technology defense industry for the VPA. Such an industry might be confined to the refilling of spent ammunition of various calibers, the manufacture of low-tech ordnance such as handgrenades or mortar rounds, the fabrication of simple spare parts, perhaps the copying of Soviet small arms, and the overhaul of light vehicles, trucks, and light engineer equipment. Probably, it would not extend to the rebuilding of major components such as helicopter, jet, or tank engines. Certainly, it would not involve the manufacture of major end items. Whatever defense industry the USSR permits Vietnam to erect, however, it is likely that the Soviets will maintain a grip on developments through the provision of machinery that only they can operate, maintain, control, or repair.<sup>56</sup>

## **11. MATERIEL CONSIDERATIONS AND PROJECTIONS**

### **a. Infantry**

In the case of the infantry, VPA main force units are equipped with Soviet and Chinese copies of the AK-47, a 7.62-mm caliber assault rifle originally developed in the USSR and now a mainstay of Third World armies and revolutionary movements. This weapon, after about 3 decades of service with the Red Army, is being phased out in favor of the AK-74, a new generation assault rifle with a smaller caliber of 5.45 mm. The AK-74 is used by Soviet troops in Afghanistan and a small number of the weapons have been captured by Afghan insurgents. Nationalistic pride and military professionalism may lead VPA leaders to seek the AK-74 as a replacement for the AK-47. It is the latest in Soviet small-arms technology and reportedly an excellent weapon. A switch to the AK-74, however, would present a vexatious disadvantage: the frugal Vietnamese would be unable to use stocks of small-arms ammunition captured from the Chinese in any future conflict, as long as the Chinese continue to use the 7.62-mm Type-56 rifle, a copy of the AK-47.

As concerns infantry vehicles, Vietnam already has a large inventory ( $\pm 1,500$ ) of the BTR series of Soviet armored personnel carriers.<sup>57</sup> These vehicles are thinly armored, lighter in weight, less expensive, and perhaps more maneuverable in the rice paddies of northern Vietnam than other Soviet combat vehicles. In addition, the open-top models are less stifling in the tropics. The most likely force development occurrence in this area would

be qualitative improvements in the servicing and maintenance of these vehicles. This could be in the form of more or better workshops at various echelons, or more complete inventories of spare parts.

An alternative to the BTRs for the Vietnamese Armed Forces would be the BMP series which are not reported by open sources to be in Vietnam. In contrast to the BTRs, the BMP are more heavily armored; they have overhead cover; and they are equipped with a 73-mm gun and antitank missiles. Consequently, they are also more expensive. The BMPs are true fighting vehicles. Their complements of infantrymen are expected to fight mounted from inside the carrier. In the case of the VPA, which has never fought in this manner, this would entail a major doctrinal change. For reasons of tactics and cost to their Soviet mentors, then, a value judgment can be made that the BMPs will not find a significant place in the VPA inventory in the short term.

b. Armor

Vietnam presently has about 1,500 main battle tanks (MBT), (discounting captured US equipment).<sup>58</sup> These vehicles are mostly Soviet-built (with some Chinese copies), and range from the T-34/85 of World War II to the comparatively modern T-62. In these tanks, the newest in the VPA inventory, the main armament consists of a 115-mm gun. In comparison to VPA armored assets, the CPLA has somewhat in excess of 11,000 tanks of all types.<sup>59</sup> The principal MBT in Chinese hands is the Type-59, an improved copy of the Soviet T-54A. The Type-59 is equipped with a 100-mm main turret gun. Since 1981, the CPLA has been upgrading its armor by phasing in the Type-69 MBT, an improved version of the Type-59 with a heavier 115-mm gun. In terms of force development, the Vietnamese Armed Forces cannot hope to match this quantity of armor in CPLA inventory. It is dubious that the USSR would provide the large number of MBTs needed by the VPA simply to achieve armored parity with the CPLA. It is equally dubious that the VPA could utilize such large numbers of additional tanks. Additional crews, in the face of the SRV personnel shortage, would have to be trained; more spares and ammunition would have to be stockpiled; and more workshops would have to be built or expanded. In the end, a military phenomenon similar to the economic law of diminishing returns would set in. At a cost of great effort, the fighting capabilities of the VPA would not be enhanced correspondingly. There is also a questionable need for further armor on either the Chinese or Vietnamese side in this area. In the mountains and rice paddies of northern Vietnam, tanks are not the combat asset they would be in more level, firmer terrain, since their mobility and shock action cannot be exploited fully. For the above reasons, it can be postulated that the VPA armored forces will undergo little expansion in coming years as a concomitant of force development.

Keeping in mind, nevertheless, that in the Vietnamese perception a potential Chinese armored threat must be countered, a plausible VPA development may be increased attention to antitank defense by means other than friendly MBTs. The focus of this attention may be concentrated in two areas: antitank weapons and antitank, wire-guided missiles. Discounting the RPG-7 rocket launcher at infantry platoon level, Warsaw Pact antitank weapons currently in the inventory include the SPG-9 73-mm recoilless rifle and the T-12A 100-mm smoothbore, antitank gun. The SPG is portable and would be a logical weapon for the Vietnamese regional forces. It would give these troops

an antitank capability beyond that of the RPG-7, and could be carried through the mountains by porters or combatants. The T-12A is like a direct-fire artillery piece, and must be towed into place and is comparatively roadbound. This restriction would tend to inhibit its deployment. Nevertheless, the weapon could be emplaced along possible avenues of approach for enemy armor.

Current antitank technology, however, is vested not in recoilless rifles and flat-trajectory direct-fire guns, but in wire-guided missiles. Among Warsaw Pact nations, a ubiquitous such missile is the AT-3/SAGGER, of which Vietnam reportedly has an undisclosed number in its inventory.<sup>60</sup> However, the SAGGER was developed in the early 1960s and is obsolescent. Next generation missiles of this type are the AT-4/SPIGOT and the AT-5/SPANDREL. Given the past reliability of the SAGGER in other conflicts and an estimate that Chinese armor may not be the dominant force in a future conflict with Vietnam because of terrain, tactics, and demands on the CPLA elsewhere, it is possible that the VPA, forced to choose among priorities, would remain content with its present generation of antitank missiles and not give urgent precedence to upgrading them to SPIGOTS or SPANDRELS.

#### c. Artillery

The VPA artillery branch should be watched for major force development innovations. Artillery is a powerful defensive weapon because it can blunt an enemy offensive or even stop it dead in its tracks. It also is suited to Vietnam's situation as it confronts a potential conflict with China. For the VPA, properly delivered concentrations of cannon and missile fire could compensate for its inferiority in numbers by decimating and disorganizing attacking Chinese forces. In the past, the Vietnamese Armed Forces have used artillery skillfully in such disparate engagements as the sieges of Dienbienphu in 1954 and Khe Sanh in 1967-68, as well as to defeat the South Vietnamese drive into Laos in 1971. Vietnam's Soviet mentors place such great reliance on this type of warfare that in the post-World War II Red Army one of five soldiers is an artilleryman.<sup>61</sup> It is possible that the Soviets, indoctrinated with their reliance on artillery, would look sympathetically upon, or even actively encourage, their Vietnamese charges to increase or upgrade their artillery assets as they pursue their force development plans.

Should the Vietnam Armed Forces choose to emphasize artillery in force development, their attention will focus on three areas: self-propelled (SP) guns, towed artillery, and multiple rocket-launching (MRL) systems. An emphasis on SP guns would be consistent with current Soviet trends toward greater mobility and larger caliber weapons.<sup>62</sup> However, SP artillery with heavier and larger guns and traversing turrets than MBTs incorporates a higher level of stabilizing and hydraulic technology. It is consequently more expensive and requires a higher state of readiness and maintenance than towed cannons. SP artillery pieces are of decisive advantage principally in an armored offensive where they can keep up with the accompanying tanks and add their firepower to sustain the momentum and shock action of the attack. In defensive combat in northern Vietnam, however, SP artillery, like MBTs, might be expensive, sophisticated, superfluous weapons in search of a mission to perform.

The negative case for SP artillery does not hold true for regular, towed artillery, however. The battlefield primacy of these latter weapons already has been recognized by the VPA, whose two artillery divisions and five independent artillery regiments are equipped with towed to SP pieces on a ratio of nearly 10 to 1.<sup>63</sup> This phenomenon has occurred because towed guns offer the ideal armaments to engage any Chinese offensive unleashed against Vietnam. VPA firing batteries, singly or in clusters to achieve mass fire-power, can be deployed throughout northern Vietnam before any outbreak of hostilities. General deployment considerations would dictate the forward emplacement of smaller-caliber guns with a more rapid rate of fire, while larger, slower firing pieces would be positioned in general support, well to the rear. If Soviet mentors have indoctrinated their Vietnamese charges in cost effectiveness as a concomitant of artillery tactics, it can be expected that the VPA would emplace its pieces to fire at less than maximum range to their targets. Such conservation measures would be desirable for a weapons-importing nation, because artillery tubes fired at maximum range, with the maximum propellant charge, will quickly become pitted and wear out and require expensive replacement. Irrespective of conservation measures, however, it can be expected that VPA fire direction personnel, as a concomitant to the advance prepositioning of their weapons, would plot meticulously and without haste extensive defensive salvos for both primary and alternate firing positions for their guns.

With the value of towed artillery thus recognized by the Vietnamese Armed Forces, likely force development measures in the future may center on the VPA's growing acceptance of Red Army doctrine, the adaptation of artillery tactics to the mountainous regions of the Viet Bac and Tay Bac, the maintenance of a high level of end items in the inventory, the replacement of wornout tubes from the Kampuchean battlefield, and the proper storage of ammunition. Another force development step, so far unheeded by observers, may be a re-evaluation of requirements for towed artillery ammunition. If Soviet advisers hold cost considerations to be paramount, there may be a conscious disregard of flechette or canister rounds and variable time (VT) fuses among VPA artillerymen; such armaments are expensive. Flechette and canister rounds cause aggravated pitting of the cannon barrels; VT fuses are subject to corrosion and deterioration of moving parts if stored improperly under tropical conditions.

Another force development consideration with respect to artillery may concern what priority the Vietnamese Armed Forces will place on MRL systems, clusters of rocket tubes mounted on a truck chassis. The VPA presently has an undisclosed number of them, ranging from 107-mm to 140-mm in its inventory.<sup>64</sup> They are excellent defensive weapons that could be used to great advantage against massed infantry troops.<sup>65</sup> They would be devastating against unprotected advancing Chinese forces. Besides the damage and casualties they cause, they have a demoralizing effect on all but the most seasoned troops because of the shattering noise with which they bear down on their targets. They are less expensive than tube artillery since they are fired from lightly constructed pods. They are more mobile since they can be deployed wherever their carrier can travel and need not be towed into place. As free-flight rockets, they are low-technology weapons as well. Weighing in against these advantages are several drawbacks. MRL systems are inaccurate and useless against point targets, and a single rocket is larger and somewhat more

expensive than a corresponding artillery round. Nevertheless, because of their excellent defensive capability and comparative costs, MRL systems could be a major focus of force development attention by VPA leaders and their Soviet advisers. This attention, in turn, may emphasize the acquisition of more or heavier truck carriers plus larger and better rockets, and keeping current with state-of-the-art technology.

**d. Chemical Warfare**

A discussion of prospective VPA artillery force development cannot be divorced from a consideration of chemical warfare. Toxic chemical agents can be disseminated by both rockets and artillery rounds. The use of such agents by the Vietnamese Armed Forces has been reported and rests on a strong web of circumstantial evidence. Official US sources have related in detail how tricothecene mycotoxins (yellow rain) have been used against H'mong guerrillas in Laos and Khmer resistance groups in Kampuchea.<sup>66</sup> The same sources report chemical warfare training in the VPA and the presence of Soviet chemical warfare advisers in both Laos and Vietnam.<sup>67</sup> In one specific incident, it was noted that Soviet crates containing canisters purportedly filled with "deadly toxic chemicals" were unloaded at Saigon Port (Ho Chi Minh City) in July 1981. The containers were then trucked under a special guard to the former US military complex at Long Binh, about 25 kilometers away.<sup>68</sup> Such examples from Indochina must be weighed against a known Soviet doctrinal commitment to chemical warfare. US sources have noted that the Soviets possess "a considerable variety of lethal and incapacitating chemical agents and the means to deliver them." Red Army military doctrine includes the use of chemical weapons and acknowledges their value, particularly when used in massive quantities and with surprise.<sup>69</sup> Taken with the evidence from Indochina and Afghanistan, this abiding Soviet interest in the military uses of toxic agents suggests a continuing collaborative effort by Moscow and Hanoi in chemical warfare. Such an effort is likely because it serves the interests of both sides. The USSR has a chance to test old, stock-piled agents as well as newly developed toxins in tactical circumstances well away from the glare of world publicity. Vietnam, for its part, has acquired a formidable cost-effective deterrent in its arsenal of weapons to use against possible Chinese aggression.

In the future, it can be expected that the USSR will continue to provide both lethal and incapacitating chemical agents to the Vietnamese Armed Forces. These substances may be used again in Kampuchea; however, it is certain that quantities will be stockpiled in northern Vietnam in case of hostilities with China. The supply of toxic agents may be limited to substances already in the Soviet inventory, but could include new compounds presently under development. In both cases, collaborative efforts between Soviet and Vietnamese chemical warfare technicians probably would focus on experimenting with or perfecting delivery systems (such as artillery or rockets, aerial bombs, or spraying), in combination with a range of old and new toxic substances.

**e. Engineers**

All weaponry in the VPA arsenal would be useless unless deployed where it is needed. In northern Vietnam, roads and airstrips must be constructed,

repaired or upgraded in all strategic areas so that troops and materiel can be shifted quickly wherever required. To accomplish this, Vietnamese force development planners must expend a modicum of effort to obtain a steady supply of Soviet military engineering equipment. Low-cost, robust end items such as bulldozers, roadgraders, various power scoops, shovels and diggers, and heavy duty trucks are needed. The provision of this materiel would be non-controversial and probably routine, but it is essential, nonetheless, if Vietnam is to plan for a total integrated defense of all its northern areas.

f. Signals

The Vietnamese Armed Forces are totally dependent on the USSR for procurement of modern signal materiel. Radios in the Soviet inventory at present include the R123 transceiver used in tanks and armored vehicles, and the R126 vhf (very high frequency) and R352 transceivers used for infantry company and platoon nets. The R123 uses sub-miniature vacuum tubes with few semi-conductors in evidence. Nevertheless, radios such as the R123, R126 vhf, and R352 are regarded as rugged and reliable.<sup>70</sup> It can be conjectured that these types of transceivers, of this level of sophistication at least, have been or are being provided to the Vietnamese Armed Forces. In the coming years, the Soviets may be willing to share with the VPA their next-generation communications gear now entering service. Such equipment probably will make greater use of semi-conductor technology or integrated chip circuitry with a corresponding reduction in size and power requirements.<sup>71</sup> More secure and effective communications systems, such as those encompassing tropospheric scatter or satellite links, may be a future development for the Soviet Operational Maneuver Groups (OMG) in Eastern Europe. However, it cannot be anticipated that such technology would be transferred to Vietnam for years to come.

g. Air Force

Vietnam's other military services also may undergo force development, perhaps from additional large-scale major acquisitions in the case of the Air Force, to very limited major end item procurement in the case of the Navy.

The combined Vietnamese Air Defense and Air Force already is the largest in Southeast Asia. Its newest aircraft is the MiG-23/FLOGGER. The model probably is the FLOGGER-E which is the export version with downgraded equipment of the FLOGGER-B, the all-weather fighter currently in the Soviet inventory.<sup>72</sup> However, Vietnam has limited numbers of such aircraft. A mainstay of the Air Force's combat strength is the MiG-21 in two versions: the newer FISHBED-J all-weather fighter, and the older FISHBED-F or PF fighter-bomber.<sup>73</sup> For ground support missions, Vietnam has the short-range Su-17/FITTER-C, a basic Soviet ground-attack aircraft, or its export version, the Su-20 FITTER-C with downgraded equipment. The Vietnamese Air Force also has in its inventory older aircraft, such as the MiG-17/FRESCO and the Shenyang F-6, the Chinese copy of the MiG-19/FARMER.

For the Air Force, developments in the future could include the acquisition of the Su-24/FENCER fighter-bomber or additional FLOGGERS. Both aircraft are expensive, high-performance, major end items, but both would be appropriate to Vietnamese Air Force missions. Such missions include the need

for ground attack aircraft to support the troops fighting in Kampuchea. In northern Vietnam, the need is to keep a reasonably large inventory of tactical aircraft on hand, ready to support the VPA in case of hostilities with China. In addition, there is a requirement for high-performance interceptors to quickly establish air superiority against Chinese aircraft that might accompany a CPLA offensive. Lastly, there would be, if not a need, at least a desire on the part of Vietnamese military leaders for fighter-bombers to carry out short-range airstrikes against the frontline positions and logistical rear of any Chinese military spearhead unleashed against Vietnam. While the FLOGGERS and FENCERS would be capable of accomplishing these missions, the provision of such aircraft would tie Hanoi to Moscow more closely than any other weapon system in the SRV inventory, because Vietnam would have no capability for upkeep or repair, beyond the most routine maintenance.

As concerns air defense, the Vietnamese Air Force already has in place a chain of about 50 early-warning stations, probably equipped with the KNIFE REST B radar. The system is tied in with about half a dozen command centers, which provide the censors for the SA-2/GUIDELINE and SA-3/GOA missiles at about 60 sites countrywide, and for an undisclosed number of 57-mm to 100-mm antiaircraft guns.<sup>74</sup> Northern Vietnam's air defense system has been in place since the early to late 1960s, and in the air war against the United States was pitted against the best aircraft technology the West had to offer. US plane losses are proof that the system functioned suitably. Future air defense force developments probably will be confined to procurement and maintenance of a sufficient number of air-to-surface (SAM) missiles and upkeep of the present system.

#### **h. Navy**

The smallest of Vietnam's military services is the Vietnamese People's Navy (VPN). It is a force with a limited mission and limited capabilities. Vietnam's geostrategic position indicates that for now, the VPN's principal task would be to make a Chinese amphibious assault on the Vietnamese coast as costly as possible. China, however, has questionable assets to undertake such an effort and could not sustain the momentum of an advance once the landing force had been put ashore. In addition, the CPLA leadership lacks the experience with the heavy coordination needed for this type of assault, arguably one of the most complicated in the conduct of warfare. The VPN then is left with the functions of coastal and maritime surveillance, the resupply and maintenance of offshore garrisons (including the Spratlys), and the detection and apprehension of seaborne infiltrators and boat people. For such tasks, the VPN has sufficient assets.

The largest vessels in the VPN inventory are PETYA I Class frigates, of which the VPN has four. Other modern combatants include eight OSA II Class fast attack craft (missile) and eight SHERSEN Class fast attack craft (torpedo).<sup>75</sup> VPN warships reportedly are equipped with SS-N-2/STYX and SS-N-3/SHADDOCK antiship missiles.<sup>76</sup> There are several Polish-built medium landing ships for resupply missions and even one helicopter squadron (possibly with the Ka-25/HORMONE) for coastal and antisubmarine surveillance and search and rescue.

Discounting the older vessels provided by China or seized from the defunct South Vietnamese Navy in 1975, modern ships in the VPN inventory originate from the Soviet Bloc and were provided between 1978 and 1981. In mid-1983, the VPA acquisition of four more OSA II Class attack craft was reported but not verified.<sup>77</sup> The lack of major additions to the Vietnamese naval inventory since that period may indicate that the USSR has suspended for the time being this part of its assistance program to Vietnam. The future as well may hold little expansion of the VPN in comparison to Vietnam's other military services. Most dubious of all developments would be the provision of nuclear warheads for the VPN's shipborne missiles as reported by one source.<sup>78</sup> The example of Argentine EXOCETs wreaking heavy damage to ships of the British Navy in the Falklands conflict demonstrates that conventional warheads are quite sufficient to sink or damage light- to medium-size vessels and that nuclear weapons are unnecessary. It can be expected that this fact will not be lost on the VPN's Soviet naval advisers, who will refrain from recommending such armaments for their counterpart Vietnamese service.

## NOTES

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<sup>2</sup> Nhan Dan (Hanoi), Foreign Broadcast Information Service (hereafter FBIS) Daily Report: Asia & Pacific, Supplement 6, 3 February 1977, p. 64.

<sup>3</sup> Nguyen Van Canh, Vietnam Under Communism (Stanford: Hoover Institution, 1983).

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), Directorate of Intelligence, Directory of Officials of Vietnam, CR 83-15688, October 1983, p. 3.

<sup>6</sup> Jonathan Luxmore, Vietnam: The Dilemmas of Reconstruction (London: Institute for the Study of Conflict, 1983), p. 16.

<sup>7</sup> Nguyen Van Canh, Vietnam Under Communism, p. 63.

<sup>8</sup> Douglas Pike, "Armed Forces of Asia and the Pacific, No. 2 - Vietnam, A Modern Sparta," Pacific Defense Reporter, April 1983, p. 33.

<sup>9</sup> CIA, Directory, pp. 41, 61-63.

<sup>10</sup> Pike, "Vietnam, A Modern Sparta," p. 37.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. p. 36.

<sup>12</sup> Documentation Fifth Vietnamese Party Congress, Contemporary Southeast Asia, vol. 4, September 1982, p. 246.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 62.

<sup>14</sup> "The Military Balance 1983-84," Pacific Defense Reporter (PDR) 1984 Annual Reference Edition, December 1983/January 1984, p. 184.

<sup>15</sup> Edgar O'Ballance, The Wars in Vietnam (New York: Hippocrene, 1981), p. 222.

<sup>16</sup> "Appeasing Vietnam," Pacific Defense Reporter, June 1984, p. 9; "An Icy Wind from Europe," Asiaweek, 22 June 1984, p. 21.

<sup>17</sup> Daniel F. O'Brien, "Vietnam," in Fighting Armies Nonaligned, Third World, and Other Ground Armies, A Combat Assessment, ed. Richard A. Gabriel (Westport, CN and London: Greenwood, 1983), p. 68; King C. Chen, "China's War Against Vietnam, 1979: A Military Analysis," Journal of East Asian Affairs, vol. III, spring/summer 1983, p. 243.

<sup>18</sup> Chen, "China's War," p. 246.

- 19 O'Brien, "Vietnam," p. 48.
- 20 "Some Projects of Vietnam's Soviet Cooperation," Vietnam Courier, December 1983, p. 2.
- 21 Douglas Pike, "Into the Swamp," Asian Survey, vol. XIX, December 1979, p. 1165.
- 22 Nguyen Van Canh, Vietnam Under Communism, p. 32.
- 23 Karen DeYoung, "New Arms, Troops Expand Soviet Military Role in Southeast Asia," Washington Post, 21 December 1983, p. 1.
- 24 David Watts, "Russia Doubles Use of Vietnam Base," The Times (London), 19 February 1983, p. 6.
- 25 Le Anh Tuan, "Who Actually Owns Cam Ranh Bay," Beijing Review, vol. 27, 23 April 1984, p. 13.
- 26 In December 1941, Japanese warplanes flying a southern course from hastily constructed airfields in Kampuchea intercepted and sank the Royal Navy capital ships, the HMS Repulse and HMS Prince of Wales.
- 27 Donald P. Whitaker et al., Area Handbook for Laos, DA Pamphlet 550-58 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1972), p. 35.
- 28 "Laos," Asia 1978 Yearbook (Hong Kong: Far Eastern Economic Review Ltd, 1978), p. 232.
- 29 Ibid.
- 30 Nhan Dan (Hanoi), 3 October 1983, in FBIS, Daily Report: Asia and Pacific, 2 December 1983, p. K6.
- 31 Pike, "Vietnam, A Modern Sparta," p. 34.
- 32 Colonel G. Ionin quoted in William P. Baxter, The Soviet Air-Land Battle (Monterey: Presidion Press, to be published in 1985), p. 4.
- 33 Ibid., p. 2.
- 34 Ibid., p. 21.
- 35 Ibid., p. 15.
- 36 Vo Nguyen Giap, To Arm the Revolutionary Masses to Build the People's Army (Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1975). p. 180.
- 37 Nhan Dan (Hanoi), 3 October 1983, FBIS, Daily Report: Asia and Pacific, 2 December 1983, p. K6.
- 38 Ibid.

39 "Some Fundamental Matters in Our National Defense and Local People's Warfare in the War for the Defense of the Fatherland - Address by Senior General Van Tien Dung," Hanoi Home Services, 12-17 April 1979, in Summary of World Broadcasts FE/6098/C/1 (A3, B, W), 23 April 1979.

40 An economic construction division is a brigade-sized unit numbering about 3,500 men as opposed to a VPA main force infantry division numbering about 10,500 personnel. See Pike, "Vietnam, A Modern Sparta," p. 34 and Erhard Hanbold, "Their Job is to Shoot Breed Pigs and Build Powerplants-- Vietnam's Armed Forces as the Nation's Big Classroom," Frankfurter Allgemeine, 1 March 1984, in JPRS-SEA-84-054, Southeast Asia Report, 12 April 1984, p. 80.

41 Nayan Chanda, "With the Next Round in Mind," Far Eastern Economic Review, 3 August 1979, p. 31.

42 Bruno Francheschi, "Hanoi-Where War is a Way of Life," Sunday Times (London), 15 April 1984, p. 21.

43 This was the tactic employed successfully by Saladin, the Saracen, against Richard the Lion-Hearted in the Third Crusade. Richard's army marching along the coast of Palestine was unable to break through Saladin's forces arrayed on the ridges just inland. The Crusaders had to content themselves with capturing the Levantine port of Acre.

44 There are two types of fighting corps in the VPA: quan-doan and binh-doan; however, the distinction between them is unclear.

45 Four VPA MTOs have been identified: Theater A encompasses Vietnam's border provinces with China; Theater B, formed especially to repel amphibious assaults, encompasses the coastal region of Vietnam from the Chinese border to south of Danang; Theater L runs from Lao Cai west to Phong Saly Province in Laos, and its mission is to prevent infiltration of Hmong guerrillas in case of war with China; Theater K encompasses Kampuchea, and its mission is not so much to fight Khmer insurgents as to guard Vietnam against invasion from the direction of Thailand. See Pike, "Vietnam, A Modern Sparta," p. 37.

46 Ibid.

47 Pacific Defense Reporter 1984 Annual Reference Edition, p. 201. Pike gives the figure of 1.18 million in the VPA, including the Navy and Air Force and a Strategic Rear Force of 2.5 million. See Pike, "Vietnam, A Modern Sparta," p. 34. Luxmore gives the overall figure of 1.029 million in the VPA. See Dilemmas of Reconstruction, p. 16.

48 Luxmore, Dilemmas of Reconstruction, p. 16.

49 Ibid., p. 9.

50 Ibid.; and CIA, The World Factbook, CR 83-11300, May 1983, p. 240.

51 By comparison, it is interesting to note the example of Israel, another beleaguered state. Out of a population of about 4 million, Tel Aviv (or Jerusalem) maintains a standing army of 135,000. Upon mobilization, this

would increase to 450,000 or about 8.33 percent of the population; see Gregory R. Copley, Defense & Foreign Affairs Handbook (Washington, D.C.: Defense & Foreign Affairs Ltd., 1983), p. 318.

52 Sven Oste, "Manpower Shortage in Agriculture" (Stockholm), Dagens Nyheter, 26 February 1984, in JPRS-SEA-84-057, Southeast Asia Report, 17 April 1984, p. 70.

53 Erhard Hanbold, "Their Job Is To Shoot..."

54 VPA soldiers are paid about \$2 a month and draw subsistence rations consisting of 22 kilos of rice a month, augmented by occasional tins of meat and fish. They are expected to grow some of their own food to supplement their diet, and vegetable gardens, pig pens, and chicken houses are a common sight around VPA installations. Troops receive two sets of fatigues and one set of tennis shoes a year, and one set of Ho Chi Minh (tire) sandals over 3 years. See Sven Oste, "Manpower Shortage in Agriculture," p. 70; and Erhard Hanbold, "Their Job Is To Shoot..."

55 Luxmore, Dilemmas of Reconstruction, p. 17.

56 The example of Indonesia may be revealing. In the early 1960s, besides an array of expensive Soviet weaponry, Indonesia also received machinery to make spare parts and repair the Soviet equipment. Manuals to operate and service the machinery remained untranslated into Indonesian, with the result that Soviet technicians always were required to be present. When they left, the machines came to a stop and now rest silent and rusting in various military depots in Java.

57 Copley, Defense & Foreign Affairs Handbook, p. 755.

58 Ibid.

59 Ibid., p. 128.

60 Ibid., p. 755.

61 Frederic A. Smith, "1812 Overture," Defense & Foreign Affairs, vol. XII, September 1984, p. 22.

62 Ibid.

63 The VPA inventory includes 2200 towed pieces, 76 mm to 155 mm, in contrast to 290 SP pieces, up to 203 mm; see Copley, Defense & Foreign Affairs Handbook, p. 755.

64 Ibid.

65 In Angola in 1975, MRLs virtually turned the tide single-handedly against the UNITA forces of Jonas Savimbi as they advanced on Luanda. The rockets, purportedly fired by Cubans, terrorized Savimbi's semitrained troops and broke up the UNITA offensive.

66 "Chemical Warfare in Southeast Asia and Afghanistan: An Update," Department of State Bulletin, vol. 82, December 1982, pp. 47-48.

67 Ibid., p. 44.

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71 Ibid., p. 871.

72 G. Jacobs, "New Soviet Arms for Vietnam," Pacific Defense Reporter, September 1982, p. 49.

73 Ibid.

74 E. R. Hooton, "Air Forces of South-east Asia," Military Technology (Bonn), January 1984, p. 11.

75 Jacobs, "New Soviet Arms for Vietnam," p. 71.

76 Pike, "Vietnam, A Modern Sparta," p. 35.

77 "Hanoi's New Punch," Far Eastern Economic Review, 29 September 1983, p. 11.

78 Pike, "Vietnam, A Modern Sparta," p. 35.



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## APPENDIX A

### MEMBERS OF THE VIETNAMESE COMMUNIST PARTY (VCP) POLITBURO (Fifth VCP Congress, March 1982)

<u>Name</u>	Chu Huy Man
<u>Telcd</u>	chu huy maan
<u>Organ</u>	VCP Central Committee (Member)
<u>Organ</u>	VCP Political Bureau (Member)
<u>Organ</u>	VCP Central Military Party Committee (Deputy Secretary)
<u>Cpos</u>	Mbr, VCP-CC
<u>Cpos</u>	Mbr, VCP-PB
<u>Cpos</u>	Dep Sec, VCP Cent Mil Party Cmte
<u>Ppos</u>	Cmdr and Polit Off, Western Highlands Front Area (1966)
<u>Ppos</u>	Dep Cdr and Sec of LDP Cmte of 5th (Cent VN) Mil Rgn (1960-)
<u>Ppos</u>	Dep Chf, Genl Polit Directorate, PAVN (1962)
<u>Ppos</u>	Mbr, LDP-CC (1960)
<u>Ppos</u>	Dep to 2d NA from Tay Bac Prov
<u>Ppos</u>	Cdr and Polit Off of Tay Bac (NW) Mil Rgn (1960)
<u>Ppos</u>	Cdr and Polit Off of 316th Div (1953)
<u>Birth</u>	1920
<u>Orgin</u>	Nghe An Prov
<u>Rank</u>	Sr Gen, VPA
<u>Milit</u>	Maj Gen PAVN (1960)

<u>Name</u>	Do Muoi
<u>Telcd</u>	doox muowowif
<u>Organ</u>	Council of Ministers
<u>Organ</u>	VCP Central Committee (Member)
<u>Organ</u>	VCP Political Bureau (Member)
<u>Cpos</u>	Vice Min, Counc of Min
<u>Cpos</u>	Mbr, VCP-CC
<u>Cpos</u>	Mbr, VCP-PB
<u>Ppos</u>	Chmn, State Capital Construction Cmsn (1971)
<u>Ppos</u>	Dep Prem (1969-)
<u>Ppos</u>	Chmn Econ Bd at Premier's Ofc (1967-71)
<u>Ppos</u>	Dep to 2d NA from Haiphong (1960)
<u>Ppos</u>	Min of Home Trade (1958-61)
<u>Ppos</u>	Mbr, LDP-CC (1956-)
<u>Ppos</u>	Vice Min of Commerce (1956-58)
<u>Ppos</u>	Chmn, People's Mil and Admin Cmte of Haiphong (1955-56)
<u>Birth</u>	1917
<u>Orgin</u>	Hanoi
<u>Rank</u>	Sr Gen, VPA
<u>Notes</u>	Described in 1972 as inactive due to health, 1961-67.

<u>Name</u>	Dong Sy Nguyen
<u>Telcd</u>	doong six nguyeen
<u>Organ</u>	Council of Ministers (Vice Chairman)
<u>Organ</u>	Ministry of Communications & Transport
<u>Organ</u>	VCP Central Committee (Member)
<u>Organ</u>	VCP Political Bureau (Alternate Member)
<u>Cpos</u>	Vice Chairman, Council of Ministers
<u>Cpos</u>	Minister of Communications & Transport
<u>Cpos</u>	Member, Central Committee VCP
<u>Cpos</u>	Alternate Member, Political Bureau VCP
<u>Rank</u>	Gen, VPA
 <u>Name</u>	 Le Duan
<u>Telcd</u>	lee zuaannr
<u>Organ</u>	VCP Central Committee (Member)
<u>Organ</u>	VCP Central Military Party Committee (Secretary)
<u>Organ</u>	VCP Secretariat (Secretary)
<u>Organ</u>	VCP Political Bureau (Member)
<u>Cpos</u>	Gen Sec, VCP
<u>Cpos</u>	Mbr, VCP-CC
<u>Cpos</u>	Sec, VCP Cent Mil Party Cmte
<u>Cpos</u>	Sec, VCP Secretariat
<u>Cpos</u>	Mbr, VCP-PB
<u>Ppos</u>	Mbr, Natl Def Counc (-1972-)
<u>Ppos</u>	Chmn, Front Dept of LDP-CC (-1972-)
<u>Ppos</u>	Dep to 4th NA from Hanoi (1971)
<u>Ppos</u>	1st Sec, LDP (1960-)
<u>Ppos</u>	Dep to 2d NA from Hanoi (1960)
<u>Ppos</u>	Chmn, Ho Chi Minh State Funeral Cmte (1960)
<u>Ppos</u>	Sec-Gen, LDP (1959)
<u>Ppos</u>	Mbr, LDP-PB (1957-)
<u>Ppos</u>	Sec, LDP-CC for Southern Rgn (1956-)
<u>Ppos</u>	Mbr, LDP-CC (1951-)
<u>Ppos</u>	Founding Mbr, ICP (1930-)
<u>Birth</u>	1908
<u>Orgin</u>	Quang Tri Prov, Central Vietnam
<u>Trav</u>	USSR, PRC (1971)
<u>Trav</u>	PRC, (1970)
<u>Trav</u>	USSR (1967)
<u>Trav</u>	USSR (1966)
<u>Trav</u>	USSR (1965)
<u>Trav</u>	USSR (1964)
<u>Trav</u>	USSR (1961)
<u>Notes</u>	imprisoned 1931-36; 1940-45

<u>Name</u>	Le Duc Anh
<u>Telcd</u>	lee duwcs anh
<u>Organ</u>	VCP Central Committee (Member)
<u>Organ</u>	VCP Political Bureau (Member)
<u>Organ</u>	VCP Central Military Party Committee (Member)
<u>Cpos</u>	Mbr, VCP-CC
<u>Cpos</u>	Mbr, VCP-PB
<u>Cpos</u>	Mbr, VCP Cent Mil Party Cmte
<u>Rank</u>	Col Gen, VPA
<u>Milit</u>	Replaced Gen. Tran Van Tra as CG and Political Commissar of MR 7 bordering Kampuchea (1976-1978)
<u>Milit</u>	CG of Vietnamese Task Force which invaded Kampuchea (1977)
<u>Affil</u>	He is an associate of Le Duc Tho

<u>Name</u>	Le Duc Tho
<u>Telcd</u>	lee duwcs thoj
<u>Organ</u>	VCP Central Committee (Member)
<u>Organ</u>	VCP Secretariat (Secretary)
<u>Organ</u>	VCP Political Bureau (Member)
<u>Organ</u>	VCP Central Military Party Committee (Deputy Secretary)
<u>Cpos</u>	Mbr, VCP-CC
<u>Cpos</u>	Sec, VCP Secretariat
<u>Cpos</u>	Mbr, VCP-PB
<u>Cpos</u>	Dep Sec, VCP Cent Mil Party Cmte
<u>Ppos</u>	Chmn, Org Dept, LDP-CC (-1972-)
<u>Ppos</u>	Spec Adv to DRV Delegation of Paris Peace Talks (1968-)
<u>Ppos</u>	Mbr, LDP Secretariat (1960)
<u>Ppos</u>	Dir, LDP Tng Sch (1959-)
<u>Ppos</u>	Sec-Gen, Nam Bo CC (SVN) (1953-)
<u>Ppos</u>	Mbr, LDP-PB (1951)
<u>Ppos</u>	Mbr, LDP-CC (1951-)
<u>Ppos</u>	Founding Mbr, Vietminh (1945-)
<u>Ppos</u>	Founding Mbr, ICP (1930)
<u>Birth</u>	1910
<u>Orgin</u>	Nam Ha Prov, North Vietnam
<u>Trav</u>	E. Germany (1971)
<u>Trav</u>	France, PRC, USSR (frequent trips to each 1968-72)
<u>Trav</u>	Hungary, Czechoslovakia (1966)
<u>Trav</u>	France (1965)
<u>Trav</u>	USSR (1964)
<u>Trav</u>	USSR, Mongolia (1961)
<u>Notes</u>	Described in 1972 as pro-Chinese in outlook.
<u>Notes</u>	Antipathy reported between Le Duc Tho and Le Duan dating from power struggle between them in the early 1950s.

Name Nguyen Co Thach  
Telcd nguyeenx cow thachj  
Organ Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
Organ VCP Central Committee (Member)  
Organ VCP Political Bureau (Member)  
Cpos Min of For Affairs  
Cpos Mbr, VCP-CC  
Cpos Mbr, VCP-PB  
Ppos Mbr, Cmte to Investigate the War Crimes of US Imperialist  
in the South (1966-)  
Ppos Head, Delegation to Geneva Conf (1962-)  
Ppos Vice Min of For Affairs (1960-)  
Ppos DRV Consul Gen to the Republic of India (1956-60)  
Ppos Mbr, Paris Peace Talks (1971-1973)  
Birth 1920  
Trav PRC (1971)  
Trav PRC (1966)  
Trav PRC, Indonesia, Burma (1965)  
Trav PRC (1964)  
Trav Hungary (1962)  
Trav Switzerland (1961)  
Affil He is reportedly a protege of Le Duc Tho

Name Nguyen Duc Tam  
Telcd nguyeenx duwcs taam (f)  
Organ VCP Central Committee (Member)  
Organ VCP Secretariat (Secretary)  
Organ VCP Political Bureau (Member)  
Cpos Mbr, VCP-CC  
Cpos Sec, VCP Secretariat  
Cpos Mbr, VCP-PB  
Ppos Genl Dir of Materials (1969)  
Ppos Vice Min of Light Ind (-1964-)

Name Pham Hung  
Telcd phamj hungf  
Organ Council of Ministers (Vice Chairman)  
Organ VCP Central Committee (Member)  
Organ Ministry of Interior  
Organ VCP Political Bureau (Member)  
Cpos Vice Chmn, Counc of Ministers  
Cpos Min of Interior  
Cpos Mbr, VCP-CC  
Cpos Mbr, VCP-PP  
Ppos Head of COSVN (1967-)  
Ppos Dep to 3d NA (1964)  
Ppos Chmn, Financial and Commercial Bd at Premier's Offc  
(1963-66)  
Ppos Chmn, Agr Bd at Premier's Offc (1960-63)  
Ppos Mbr, LDP Secretariat (1960-)  
Ppos Dep to 2d NA (1960)

<u>Ppos</u>	Dep Prem (1958-57)
<u>Ppos</u>	Mbr, LDP-PB (1957-)
<u>Ppos</u>	Min at Premier's Offc (1955-)
<u>Ppos</u>	Mbr, LDP-CC (1951-)
<u>Ppos</u>	Mbr, ICP (1930-)
<u>Ppos</u>	Mbr, Rev Youth League (1920s)
<u>Birth</u>	1912
<u>Orgin</u>	Vinh Long Prov, SVN
<u>Trav</u>	Indonesia (1959)
<u>Trav</u>	India, Burma (1958)
<u>Trav</u>	Czechoslovakia, USSR (1957)
<u>Affil</u>	close friend of Pham Van Dong
<u>Notes</u>	aka Hai Hung
<u>Notes</u>	imprisoned at Poulo Condore (ca 1931-45)
 <u>Name</u>	Pham Van Dong
<u>Telcd</u>	phamj vawn doongf
<u>Organ</u>	Council of Ministers
<u>Organ</u>	VCP Central Committee (Member)
<u>Organ</u>	VCP Political Bureau (Member)
<u>Cpos</u>	Chmn, Counc of Min
<u>Cpos</u>	Mbr, VCP-CC
<u>Cpos</u>	Mbr, VCP-PB
<u>Ppos</u>	Dep to 4th NA from Hanoi (1971)
<u>Ppos</u>	Chmn, CC for Protection of Mothers and Children (1968-71
 <u>Ppos</u>	Vice Chmn, Natl Defense Counc (1960-)
<u>Ppos</u>	Prem, Counc of Min (1955-)
<u>Ppos</u>	Min of For Affairs (1954-61)
<u>Ppos</u>	Chmn, Agrarian Land Reform Cmte (1954-56)
<u>Ppos</u>	Mbr, LDP-PB (1951-)
<u>Ppos</u>	Mbr, LDP-CC (1951-)
<u>Ppos</u>	Dep Prem (1949-)
<u>Ppos</u>	Chmn, Natl Defense Counc (1948-60)
<u>Ppos</u>	Min of Finance, DRV (1945-)
<u>Ppos</u>	Founding Mbr, Viet Minh (1941-)
<u>Ppos</u>	Founding Mbr, ICP (1930)
<u>Ppos</u>	Mbr, Rev Youth League (1925-)
<u>Birth</u>	1906
<u>Orgin</u>	Mo Duc village, Quang Ngai Prov, Annam
<u>Trav</u>	PRC (1971)
<u>Trav</u>	USSR, PRC, E. Germany (1969)
<u>Trav</u>	India (1966)
<u>Trav</u>	USSR (1964)
<u>Trav</u>	PRC (1961)
<u>Trav</u>	India, Burma, Indonesia (1955)
<u>Trav</u>	PRC, USSR, (1954)
<u>Trav</u>	France (1946)
<u>Notes</u>	imprisoned on Poulo Condore (1929-35)
<u>Notes</u>	His father was a mandarin and private secretary to Emperor Duy Tan, who was deposed by the French in 1916 for his support of nationalist movements.

Name To Huu  
Telcd toos huwux  
Organ Council of Ministers (Vice Chairman)  
Organ VCP Central Committee (Member)  
Organ VCP Political Bureau (Member)  
Cpos Vice Chmn, Counc of Ministers  
Cpos Mbr, VCP-CC  
Cpos Mbr, VCP Polit Cmte  
Ppos Dir, Propaganda and Tng Sch (1971-)  
Ppos Dep to 3d NA (1964)  
Ppos Chmn, Propaganda and Educ Dept of LDP-CC (1963-)  
Ppos Mbr, LDP Secretariat (1960-)  
Ppos Dep to 2d NA from Ninh Binh Prov (1960)  
Ppos Chmn, Cult and Educ Bd at the Premier's Offc (1958-63)  
Ppos Mbr, Viet Literary Society (1957-)  
Ppos Mbr, LDP-CC (1956-)  
Ppos Vice Min of Cult (1955-56)  
Ppos Mbr, Exec Cmte, Vietnam-Soviet Friendship Assn (1955-)  
Ppos Vice Min of Info (1954-55)  
Ppos Dir Gen of Info (1951-)  
Ppos Alt Mem, LDP-CC (1951-)  
Birth 1920  
Orgin Thua Thien Prov, Annam  
Trav Italy (1972)  
Trav USSR, Cuba (1964)  
Trav Poland, Hungary, Mongolia (1959)  
Trav PRC (1956)  
Affil protege of Truong Chinh  
Notes real name Nguyen Kim Thanh  
Notes recognized poet

Name Truong Chinh  
Telcd truwowngf chinh  
Organ State Council  
Organ VCP Central Committee (Member)  
Organ VCP Political Bureau (Member)  
Cpos Chmn, State Counc  
Cpos Mbr, VCP-CC  
Cpos Mbr, VCP-PB  
Ppos Chmn, Research on Party History Dept of LDP-CC (-1972-)  
Ppos Mbr, Natl Def Counc (1971-)  
Ppos Dep to 4th NA from Hanoi (1971)  
Ppos Mbr, Electoral Bd of 4th NA (1971)  
Ppos Mbr, Presid, VN Fatherland Front (1961)  
Ppos Chmn, NA Stg Cmte (1960-)  
Ppos Dep Prem, Counc of Min (1958-60)  
Ppos Chmn, Scientific Research Cmsn (1958-61)  
Ppos Head, Rectification of Errors Campaign (1957-)  
Ppos Mbr, VN Fatherland Front (1955)  
Ppos Vice Chmn, Agrarian Land Reform Cmte (1954-56)  
Ppos Mbr, Vietnam Peace Cmte (1953-)  
Ppos Sec-Gen, LDP Secretariat (1951-56)  
Ppos Mbr, LDP-CC (1951-)

Ppos Mbr, LDP-PB (1951-)  
Ppos Founding Mbr, VN-Soviet Friendship Assn (1950)  
Ppos Mbr, 1st NA of DRV (1946)  
Ppos Sec-Gen, ICP Secretariat (1941-51)  
Ppos Head, ICP Propaganda Dept (1940-)  
Ppos Editor, Labor News, Current News, Progressive News,  
Information News, Assembly News, Modern News  
Ppos Founding Mbr, ICP (1930)  
Ppos Mbr, Rev Youth League (ca 1929)  
Birth 1900  
Orgin Nam Dinh Prov, North Vietnam  
Trav East Germany (1971)  
Trav Indonesia (1964)  
Trav USSR (1956)  
Trav Switzerland (1954)  
Auth The August Revolution: The Resistance Will Win (1946-47);  
(reprint 1965)  
Notes described in 1972 as leader of the pro-Chinese element in  
the party hierarchy  
Notes suffered brief eclipse 1956-58 for role in agrarian land  
reform program  
Notes imprisoned by French (1931-36)  
Notes son of teacher  
Notes real name Dang Xuan Khu; Truong Chinh means "long march"

Name Van Tien Dung  
Telcd vawn tieens zungx  
Organ Ministry of National Defense  
Organ VCP Central Committee (Member)  
Organ VCP Political Bureau (Member)  
Organ VCP Central Military Party Committee (First Deputy  
Secretary)  
Cpos Min of Natl Defense  
Cpos Mbr, VCP-CC  
Cpos Mbr, VCP-PB  
Cpos 1st Dep Sec, VCP Cent Mil Party Cmte  
Ppos Vice Sec, Cent Mil Party Cmte (-1972-)  
Ppos Dep to 4th NA from Hanoi (1971)  
Ppos Dep to 3d NA from Ha Bac Prov (1964)  
Ppos Mbr, LDP-CC (1960-)  
Ppos Mbr, Natl Def Counc (1960-)  
Ppos Alt Mbr, LDP-PB (1960)  
Ppos Lt Gen, VPA (1959)  
Ppos Chf, Genl Staff, PAVN (1953)  
Ppos Alt Mbr, LDP-CC (1951-)  
Ppos Maj Gen, VPA (1947)  
Ppos Chmn, Mil Polit Dept and Dep Sec, Mil Current Affairs Cmt  
(1946)  
Ppos Mbr, ICP (1937)  
Ppos Worker, Cu Chung Textile Mill, Hanoi (1936)  
Birth 1917  
Orgin Co Nhue village, Ha Dong Prov  
Trav Hungary (1984)  
Trav USSR (1981)

<u>Trav</u>	Kampuchea (1979)
<u>Trav</u>	Hungary, USSR (1969)
<u>Trav</u>	USSR(1963)
<u>Rank</u>	Sen Gen, VPA
<u>Milit</u>	Cdr, 320th Div
<u>Affil</u>	close associate of Vo Nguyen Giap
<u>Auth</u>	<u>Great Spring Victory</u> , (Hanoi) 1976
<u>Notes</u>	2d wife, Ky (aka Thanh Toe), is described in 1972 as high-ranking cadre
<u>Notes</u>	imprisoned 1939-44
<u>Notes</u>	of peasant family
<u>Notes</u>	"Vietnam has always received reliable assistance from the Soviet Union."

<u>Name</u>	Vo Chi Cong
<u>Telcd</u>	vox chis coong
<u>Organ</u>	VCP Central Committee (Member)
<u>Organ</u>	VCP Secretariat (Secretary)
<u>Organ</u>	VCP Political Bureau (Member)
<u>Cpos</u>	Mbr, VCP-CC
<u>Cpos</u>	Sec, VCP Secretariat
<u>Cpos</u>	Mbr, VCP-PB
<u>Ppos</u>	Sec, People's Revolutionary Party, Central Vietnam
<u>Birth</u>	1912
<u>Orgin</u>	Central Vietnam
<u>Notes</u>	Reportedly a strong advocate of liberalization in agriculture

<u>Name</u>	Vo Van Kiet
<u>Telcd</u>	vox vawn kieetj
<u>Organ</u>	Council of Ministers (Vice Chairman)
<u>Organ</u>	State Planning Commission (Chairman)
<u>Organ</u>	VCP, Central Committee (Member)
<u>Organ</u>	VCP Political Bureau (Member)
<u>Cpos</u>	Vice Chmn, Counc of Min
<u>Cpos</u>	Chmn, State Plng Cmsn
<u>Cpos</u>	Mbr, VCP-CC
<u>Cpos</u>	Mbr, VCP-PB
<u>Ppos</u>	Sec, VCP-Ho Chi Minh City (1980)
<u>Birth</u>	1922
<u>Orgin</u>	South Vietnam
<u>Rank</u>	Sr Gen, VPA

## APPENDIX B

### MILITARY SERVICE LAW OF THE SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM\*

Passed by the SRV National Assembly on 30 December 1981  
Signed into Law by Truong Chinh, State Council on 10 January 1982

In order to promote the Vietnamese people's patriotic tradition and revolutionary heroism, to implement the people's right to collective mastery, to create conditions for Vietnamese citizens to fulfill their military service, to build up a modern and regular People's Army and to strengthen national defense, thereby insuring successful fulfillment of the tasks of defending and building the socialist Vietnam fatherland, this law, by virtue of Articles 52, 77 and 83 of the SRV Constitution, specifies the military service system for all citizens of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam.

#### Chapter 1

##### Generalities

Article 1. Defending the socialist fatherland is a sacred duty and noble right of all citizens. All citizens have the duty to perform military service and participate in building the all-people's national defense.

Article 2. A glorious duty of all citizens is to fulfill their military service by serving in the VPA. Performing military service includes serving on active duty in the army and serving in the reserve army. The citizen serving in the army is called an active duty soldier. The citizen serving in the reserve army is called a reserve soldier.

Article 3. All male citizens, regardless of nationality, social stratum, faith, religion, cultural level, occupation or residence, have the obligation to serve on active duty in the VPA.

Article 4. In peacetime women with specialized skills needed by the army shall register for military service and shall be called for military training. If such women volunteer, they may be allowed to serve in the army as active duty soldiers. In wartime, by decisions of the Council of Ministers, women shall be inducted and shall be assigned suitable tasks.

Article 5. The following persons are not allowed to perform military service:

1. People who are in the period in which their right to serve in the people's armed forces is still deprived by law or by a people's court.
2. People under detention.

Article 6. Active duty and reserve soldiers include officers, career soldiers [quaan nhaan chuyeen nghieep], noncommissioned officers and men. The army service system for officers is regulated by the VPA officers law.

\*A Hanoi Domestic Service, 11-12 January 1982 in FBIS, Daily Report: Asia and Pacific, 13 January 1982, p. K10 and 15 January 1982, p. K4.

Article 7. Active duty and reserve soldiers are bestowed military ranks commensurate with their functions. The VPA military rank system is specified by the Council of State. The bestowing, promoting, demoting and depriving of military ranks of officers are specified in the VPA officers law. The bestowing, promoting, demoting and depriving of military ranks of career soldiers are specified by the Council of Ministers. The bestowing, promoting, demoting and depriving of military ranks of noncommissioned officers and men are specified by the national defense minister.

Article 8. All active duty and reserve soldiers must pledge allegiance to the fatherland, the people and the SRV state.

Article 9. During their military training all active duty and reserve soldiers enjoy the rights and duties as citizens as specified in the SRV Constitution and laws.

Article 10. State organs, the Vietnam Fatherland Front, the Vietnam Confederation of Trade Unions, the Ho Chi Minh Communist Youth Union, the Vietnam Women's Union, the Vietnam Federation of Collective Peasants, other social organizations, schools and families, each within its own competence, have the duty to motivate, educate, organize and create conditions for citizens to fulfill their military service duty.

Article 11. Those localities, mass organizations, government agencies, units, families and individuals that score many achievements in implementing the military service system as specified in this law shall be commended and awarded by the state.

## Chapter 2

### Active Service of Noncommissioned Officers and Men

Article 12. All 18-year-old male youths are inducted. The draft age ranges from 18 to 27.

Article 13. Any 17-year-old male citizen who volunteers to serve for a long time in the army and who meets all the requirements specified by the national defense minister may be admitted for training to a military school and recognized as an active duty soldier.

Article 14. The active service periods for noncommissioned officers [NCO's] and men are determined as follows:

1. 3 years for NCO's and men;
2. 4 years for NCO's and men whose specialized or technical skills are acquired in the army and for NCO's and men serving aboard navy ships;
3. 2 years for NCO's and men graduated from higher schools or colleges;
4. 2 years for NCO's and men of certain ethnic minorities as specified by the Council of Ministers.

Article 15. Whenever necessary, the national defense minister has the right to retain NCO's and men in the army for some time -- but not more than 6 months -- after the expiration of their related military service period specified in Article 14.

Article 16. The assessment of the lengths of active service of NCO's and men is regulated by the national defense minister. A soldier's time spent for military disciplinary measures or desertion time shall not be considered part of his active service period.

### Chapter 3

#### Preparations for Youths to Serve in the Army

Article 17. All male youths, before reaching the draft age and before their induction into the army, must be trained according to popular military training programs, which include political education, military training, training in the sense of organization and discipline and physical training. Popular military training for students of general middle schools, vocational schools, vocational middle schools, higher schools and colleges is part of the educational program. As for youths not studying at schools, popular military training shall be given through training courses at villages, wards, towns, government agencies, enterprises and other grassroots-level units. The chairmen of people's committees of villages, wards and towns, school principals and chiefs of government agencies, enterprises, and other grassroots-level units are responsible for the popular military training of the youths in their units. These popular military training programs will be decided by the national defense minister.

Article 18. Ministries, state committees, and other government agencies under the Council of Ministers, the People's National Defense Education Steering Committee [uyr ban chir dqaqj giaoq ducj quooc phongf nhaan daan] provincial and municipal people's committees subordinate to the central government and their equivalents having vocational schools, vocational middle schools, higher schools and colleges under their control are responsible for training specialized and technical cadres and personnel for the army in accordance with the National Defense Ministry's plans approved by the Council of Ministers.

Article 19. Preparing youths to serve in the army and the serving of induction orders must be carried out by districts, precincts, towns and municipalities of the province concerned. Every January, the directors of vocational schools, vocational middle schools, higher schools and colleges and the chiefs of government agencies, enterprises and grassroots-level units must submit namelists of their units, male youths who are 17 years old that year to the military commands of districts, precincts, towns and municipalities of the province concerned.

Article 20. Every April, upon receiving callup orders from the chiefs of military commands of districts, precincts, towns, and municipalities of the province concerned, male youths who are 17 years old that year must register for military service at military organizations. Responsibility for the registrants' physical checkups falls on the public health services of districts, precincts, towns and municipalities of the province concerned. Following his registration, the registrant is called a ready-for-induction man.

[Text]

### Chapter 4

#### Induction Into and Discharge From the Army

##### Section 1: Induction Callup

Article 21. The callup of citizens to join the army will take place from once to twice a year, in February and March and in August and September. The Council of Ministers shall decide on the number of inductees. Citizens shall be called to join the army on the orders of the minister of national defense. People's committees at all levels are responsible for supervising the callup of citizens in their localities. According to the decisions of people's committees, commanders of military forces in districts, precincts, cities and municipalities of the province concerned call each citizen to join the army. Induction orders must be delivered to citizens 15 days before the dates of induction. With regard to localities heavily affected by natural calamities, the minister of national defense has the right to change the dates of induction for citizens in these localities.

Article 22. Inductees must report in time to the places prescribed in callup orders. If they cannot show up at prescribed dates, they must have certificates accounting for their delay from people's committees. Citizens who do not comply with induction orders shall be punished according to Point 1 of Article 69 of this law. In addition to this, they shall continue to be subject to military service callups until they are 35 years old.

Article 23. People's committees of villages, wards and towns, heads of organs, industrial enterprises and other units and establishments are responsible for:

1. Organizing the sendoffs of inductees who are personnel of organs, enterprises and establishments, and creating conditions for them to be present at the dates and in the places mentioned in callup orders.

2. Scrupulously implementing regulations and policies toward soldiers' families.

#### Section 2: Military Service Councils

Article 24. People's committees at all levels shall set up Military Service Councils at their levels to help them carry out the military service task in localities. Military Service Councils at all levels shall include chairmen who are people's committee chairmen; vice chairmen who are military force commanders; and members who are leading cadres of such sectors as planning, manpower, public security, public health, culture, Fatherland Front Committees, trade unions, the Ho Chi Minh Communist Youth Union, the Women's Union and the Collective Peasants Union. Military Service Councils at all levels shall operate according to the collective principle. Their resolutions must be approved by more than half the total number of their members.

Article 25. Military Service Councils of villages, wards and towns have the duty to help the people's committees:

1. Organize propaganda among and education of citizens to perform military service scrupulously;
2. Urge citizens to register for military service;
3. Draft lists of citizens who are to be called up to join the army, who are entitled to military service deferment and who are exempt from military service;
4. Urge citizens to comply with callup orders; and
5. Supervise the implementation of the army rear service policy in localities by responsible organs and organizations.

Article 26. Military Service Councils of districts, precincts, cities and municipalities of the province concerned have the duty to help people's committees:

1. Organize physical checkups for citizens who have received induction orders;
2. Establish lists of citizens who are called up to join the army, who are entitled to military service deferment and who are exempt from military service;
3. Supervise the implementation of the army rear service policy in localities by responsible organs and organizations; and
4. Direct the activities of village, ward and town Military Service Councils.

Article 27. The Military Service Councils of provinces, municipalities directly subordinate to the central government and equivalent levels are dutybound to assist the people's committees in:

1. Guiding the activities of the Military Service Councils of districts, precincts, cities and municipalities subordinate to a province.
2. Considering and settling complaints and denunciations made by citizens concerning decisions of the people's committees of districts, precincts, cities and municipalities subordinate to a province on the callup of citizens, deferment and exemption of military service. These complaints and denunciations must be settled no later than 1 month after they are received, or 2 months for cases requiring longer investigation. Decisions of the people's committees of districts, precincts, cities and municipalities subordinate to a province must be implemented while the complaints and denunciations by citizens are under consideration.

Article 28. The checkups of persons liable to be called up are performed by the medical checkup councils of districts, precincts, cities and municipalities subordinate to a province. The results of these checkups must be publicly announced.

#### Section 3: Draft Deferment and Military Service Exemption

Article 29. Draft deferment shall be granted to:

1. Persons pronounced by a medical checkup council as medically unfit for active military duties. These persons must be rechecked every year to be either drafted, shifted to the reserve service or exempted from military service.
2. Sole breadwinners personally in charge of feeding other family members who are no longer or not yet fit for labor and who have no other support.
3. Sole surviving son of fallen heroes' families.
4. Researchers on scientific projects of the state as certified by ministers, chairmen of the state commissions and heads of agencies of the Council of Ministers or those of equivalent positions.
5. Students of general middle schools and vocational schools and those who are attending long-term training courses in specialized middle schools, colleges and universities.

The cases of individuals mentioned in points 2-5 above must be reconsidered every year. If the individuals are no longer qualified for deferment, they must be drafted. Those who are still granted their deferment at the age of 27 will be shifted to the reserve force branch.

Article 30. Those who are infirm and suffer from mental or other incurable diseases cited in the lists stipulated by the ministers of public health and national defense, will be exempted from military service.

Article 31. Draft deferment and exemption from military service in accordance with Articles 29 and 30 of this law will be decided upon by the people's committees of districts, precincts, cities and municipalities subordinate to a province.

The lists of those who are deferred from draft and those who are exempted from military service must be announced publicly.

#### Section 4: Discharge From the Army

Article 32. Noncommissioned officers and soldiers who meet the lengths of military service mentioned under Article 14 of this law shall be discharged from the army. On orders from the minister of national defense, commanders of units at the regimental level and above are responsible for the demobilization of noncommissioned officers and soldiers under their command. The date of demobilization of noncommissioned officers and soldiers must be made known to the localities, basic units and the militarmen concerned 1 month prior to the expiration of their military service.

Article 33. Noncommissioned officers and soldiers in active service may be discharged from the army earlier than scheduled in the following cases:

1. They are judged by the military medical examination board to be physically incapable of continuing military service.
2. They have family circumstances as mentioned under items 2 and 3, Article 29 of this law.

Article 34. Noncommissioned officers and soldiers, upon expiration of their military service, may volunteer to continue their military service for at least 1 year. The system governing the extended military service of noncommissioned officers and soldiers shall be regulated by the minister of national defense.

Article 35. Discharged noncommissioned officers and soldiers, within 15 days after returning to their places of residence, must register for reserve duty at the military commands of villages, city wards and towns and the military commands of districts, precincts, cities and municipalities subordinate to provinces.

Article 36. The people's committees of villages, city wards and towns and the leaders of public organs, enterprises and other grassroots-level units are responsible for:

1. Organizing the reception of returning discharged militarymen.
2. Creating conditions for discharged militarymen to quickly stabilize their life.

## Chapter 5

### Services of Noncommissioned Officers and Soldiers on Reserve Duty

Article 37. Reserve noncommissioned officers and soldiers are classified into Category 1 reserve militarymen and Category 2 reserve militarymen. Reserve militarymen of Category 1 consist of noncommissioned officers and soldiers who have fulfilled or overfulfilled active military service, who have been discharged from the army earlier than scheduled but have completed more than 1 year of active duty, and who have performed combat duty. Reserve militarymen of Category 2 consist of noncommissioned officers and soldiers who have had less than 1 year of active duty, male citizens who have not yet had active military duty for reasons mentioned under Article 29 of this law and have been given reserve status, and women who have registered for military obligation as provided for under Article 4 of this law. Male citizens who are reserve militarymen of Category 2 shall be upgraded to Category 1 after completing 12 months in a training center.

Article 38. The age limits for reserve duty of noncommissioned officers are regulated as follows: Up to 50 years of age for men and 40 years of age for women.

Article 39. Based on the age brackets, male reserve militarymen are divided into three groups: Group A consists of those up to 35 years of age; Group B consists of those from 36 to 45 years of age; and Group C consists of those from 46 to 50 years of age.

Article 40. The training of reserve militarymen is regulated as follows:

1. Training duration for Group A: Reserve militarymen of Category 1 shall receive training in four phases at the most, with each phase lasting from 2 to 3 months. Reserve militarymen of Category 2 shall receive training in five phases at the most, with each phase lasting from 2 to 3 months.
2. While in Group B, reserve militarymen of both Category 1 and Category 2 shall receive training in one or two phases with each phase lasting from 1 to 2 months.
3. While in Group C, reserve militarymen of both Category 1 and Category 2 shall receive training in one phase lasting for 1 month.

Article 41. In between training phases, the minister of national defense is empowered to order the assembling of reserve forces personnel for not more than 7 days in order to inspect their combat readiness.

Article 42. The assembling of reserve forces personnel for training or combat readiness inspection for the duration of the time mentioned under Article 40 and Article 41 of this law shall be decided upon by the minister of national defense. When necessary, the minister of national defense is empowered to extend the training course for reserve militarymen for not more than 2 months or to increase the training phases for reserve militarymen of Group A and Group B, providing the total amount of time spent in training does not exceed that which is provided for under Article 40 and Article 41 of this law.

Article 43. Physical checkups for reserve militarymen shall be carried out by public health organs of districts, precincts, cities and municipalities subordinate to provinces.

Article 44. Reserve noncommissioned officers and soldiers who are past service age or found to be no longer physically fit for reserve duty shall be relieved from duty upon the decision of the military commanders of districts, precincts, cities and municipalities subordinate to the provinces.

## Chapter 6

### Services of Specialized Militarymen

Article 45. Specialized militarymen are those who possess the necessary professional and technical skills for command, combat, combat support and army building operations and who volunteer to serve for a long time in the army.

Article 46. If they volunteer, noncommissioned officers and soldiers who have completed their active military service or who are in reserve status, and who possess professional and technical skills, may be accepted to become specialized militarymen.

Article 47. Specialized militarymen may enter into active military service either for a period of time or on a long-term basis until the age of 50. The regulations on active military service of specialized militarymen shall be established by the Council of Ministers.

Article 48. Specialized militarymen, upon their discharge from the army, shall be transferred to reserve duty in accordance with the regulations for reserve noncommissioned officers and soldiers. Those who are fully qualified shall be given officer rank and registered for reserve officer service.

## Chapter 7

### Obligation and Privileges of Career Soldiers, Noncommissioned Officers and Active Duty and Reserve Soldiers

Article 49. Career soldiers, noncommissioned officers and active duty and reserve soldiers have the obligation:

1. To remain absolutely faithful to the fatherland, the people and the SRV state; to uphold revolutionary vigilance; to stand ready to fight, make sacrifices and firmly defend the socialist Vietnamese fatherland; and to fulfill all assigned tasks.
2. To respect the people's right of collective mastery and to resolutely defend socialist property and the people's lives and property.
3. To implement the party's line and policies, the state laws and the armed forces rules and regulations in an exemplary manner.
4. To endeavor to learn politics, military affairs and cultural, technical and professional subjects; to train oneself in organizational capacity, discipline and physical strength and to incessantly raise one's fighting capability.

Article 50. Career soldiers, noncommissioned officers and active duty and reserve soldiers who are called on to train or to have their combat readiness inspected, if they register achievements in fighting, work or training, shall be awarded orders, medals, state honorary titles or other forms of reward in accordance with their merits.

Article 51. During the term of their service, career soldiers shall enjoy the salary system, while noncommissioned officers and enlisted men shall enjoy the supply system in accordance with provisions by the Council of Ministers.

Article 52. Career soldiers, noncommissioned officers and reserve soldiers, during the period devoted to training and inspection of combat readiness, shall enjoy the system of compensation determined by the Council of Ministers.

Article 53. Career soldiers, noncommissioned and active duty soldiers:

1. Shall have their material and spiritual life ensured.
2. Shall be considered as occupants when their families are assigned living quarters or shall be apportioned land for livelihood and cultivation reserved for the familial supplementary economy.
3. Shall have their active duty time computed as service time.
4. Shall have priority in buying tickets when traveling by means of public transportation.
5. Shall be accorded favored treatment with regard to postal fees in accordance with provisions by the Council of Ministers.

Article 54. Families of soldiers in service shall receive care and assistance from the local administration and social organizations and shall enjoy preferential treatment determined by the Council of Ministers.

Article 55. Upon their discharge, noncommissioned officers and enlisted men shall receive a discharge allowance, transportation fees and a traveling allowance and shall be issued military equipment in accordance with provisions by the minister of national defense.

Article 56.

1. Those noncommissioned officers and enlisted men who have completed or exceeded their time in service, upon return to their regions after discharge, shall be given priority by the administration of various echelons in class admission, recruitment or job assignment.
2. Those noncommissioned officers and enlisted men who worked at any installation before induction shall be allowed to work at that installation upon their discharge. If the old installation has been dissolved, the immediate higher agency shall be responsible for receiving them.
3. Those noncommissioned officers and enlisted men who graduated from trade schools, vocational and higher education schools or colleges before induction but were not assigned work shall have priority in work assignments and shall be exempted from apprenticeship upon their discharge.
4. Those noncommissioned officers and enlisted men who received papers for admission to trade schools, vocational and higher education schools or colleges before induction shall be allowed to attend these schools upon their discharge.

Article 57. Should career soldiers, noncommissioned officers and active duty and reserve soldiers be wounded, become sick or die while defending the country or performing military tasks, they shall enjoy favored treatment or have such treatment extended to their families in accordance with provisions by the Council of Ministers.

## Chapter 8

### Registration for Military Service

Article 58. Registration of reserve soldiers and men ready for induction shall be carried out at their places of residence according to two levels:

1. Registration at villages, wards or towns shall be placed under the responsibility of villages, ward or town military commands.
2. Registration at districts, sectors, cities, or municipalities under provinces shall be placed under the responsibility of military commands of districts, sectors, cities or municipalities under provinces.

Article 59. Reserve soldiers and men ready for induction shall, before moving to another locality, report to village, ward or town military commands and those of district, sectors, cities or municipalities under provinces to have their names deleted from registration books. Upon their arrival in new localities, they must report, within 7 days, to the village, ward or town military commands, and, within 10 days, to those of districts, sectors, cities or municipalities under provinces to have their names placed on registration books.

Article 60. For reserve soldiers and men ready for induction when there are changes in the addresses of their work or study locations, in the functions of their work or in their cultural level, they must, within 10 days, report to village, ward or town military commands for supplementary registration.

Article 61. The chiefs of agencies, enterprises and other organizations of higher echelons stationed in districts, sectors, cities or municipalities under provinces must compile a list of reserve soldiers and men ready for induction in their own installations and send it to the military commands of districts, sectors, cities or municipalities under provinces in accordance with provisions of the minister of national defense.

Article 62. Within the scope of their functions, the people's court, the people's organ of control, the security organ and other agencies concerned are responsible for coordination with military agencies of equal level in implementing provisions on managing men ready for induction and reserve soldiers.

#### Chapter 9

##### Enlistment in Accordance With the General or Regional Mobilization Order; Discharge in Accordance With the Demilitarization Order

Article 63. Upon the issuance of the general or regional mobilization order, the call for induction according to such an order or subsequent calls shall be carried out in accordance with the Council of Ministers decision and the defense minister's order.

Article 64. Upon the issuance of the general or regional mobilization order:

1. Discharge shall be suspended for those soldiers whose service time has expired.
2. Reserve soldiers must report at the right time and location as stipulated in the induction order.

Article 65. Induction exemption during wartime shall be determined by the Council of Ministers.

Article 66. During wartime, soldiers' families shall enjoy favored treatment determined by the Council of Ministers.

Article 67. Upon the issuance of the order of demilitarization of troops after the war, the discharge of soldiers will be carried out in accordance with the Council of Ministers' decision and defense minister's order.

Article 68. Discharged soldiers mentioned in Article 67 shall enjoy the privileges stipulated in Articles 55 and 56 of this law.

## Chapter 10

### Dealing With Violations

#### Article 69.

1. Those of military service age who do not correctly implement the provisions on military service registration or the orders on induction or assembly and training shall be dealt with by administrative measures according to the severity of their violations. They shall be punished through nondetention reform for a period of from 3 months to 2 years or through imprisonment from 3 months to 2 years. Those who commit violations during wartime or other compounding infractions shall be sentenced to from 6 months to 5 years' imprisonment.
2. Those who take advantage of their functions or authority to violate the provisions on military service registration or the order on induction or assembly and training, depending on the severity of their violations, shall be dealt with in accordance with administrative discipline or shall be sentenced to from 6 months to 5 years' imprisonment.
3. Those who obstruct the military service registration or the implementation of the orders on induction or assembly and training, depending on the severity of their violations, shall be dealt with by administrative measures or shall be sentenced to from 3 months to 3 years' imprisonment. Those who commit crimes mentioned in Points 2 and 3 during wartime or other compounding infractions shall receive sentences of up to 10 years' imprisonment.

Article 70. Deserters shall be dealt with in accordance with the armed forces' regulations and discipline or sentenced to from 6 months to 3 years' imprisonment. Those who commit crimes during wartime or other compounding infractions shall receive sentences of up to 15 years' imprisonment.

Article 71. Those who coverup the criminals mentioned in Point 1 of Article 69 and in Article 70 of this law, depending on the severity of their violations, shall be dealt with in accordance with administrative discipline or shall be sentenced to from 3 months to 3 years' imprisonment.

## Chapter 11

### Last Articles

Article 72. This law shall rescind the Military Service Law of 15 April 1960 and the amendments and supplements to such law dated 26 October 1962 and 10 April 1965.

Article 73. The Council of Ministers shall determine details for implementing this law.

This law was passed by the Second Session of the Seventh SRV National Assembly on 30 December 1981.

[Signed] Nguyen Huu Tho, chairman of the SRV National Assembly

## APPENDIX C

### MILITARY OFFICERS' LAW OF THE SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM\*

Passed by the SRV National Assembly on 30 December 1981  
Signed Into Law by Truong Chinh, Chairman, State Council on 10 January 1982

In order to contribute to building a standardized and modernized people's army, strengthening national defense and ensuring successful implementation of the task of defending and building the Vietnamese socialist fatherland; and to determine the responsibilities of VPA officers and enhance their fighting spirit, organizational and disciplinary characters; and by virtue of Article 51 and Article 83 of the SRV Constitution, this law deals with officers of the VPA.

#### Chapter I

##### General Regulations

Article 1. Officers of the VPA are military cadres who have been given general, field and junior grade rank by the state.

Article 2. Officers of the People's Army comprise:

1. Commanding staff officers;
2. Political officers;
3. Rear service and financial officers;
4. Technical officers;
5. Military medicine and veterinary officers;
6. Military police officers; and
7. Administrative officers.

Article 3. Officers of the People's Army are classified into two groups of active-duty officers and reserve officers.

Article 4. Citizens of the SRV who fully meet the political, cultural, physical and age requirements and who are capable of engaging in activities in the military field may be trained to become officers.

Article 5. The persons listed below have been selected for reinforcement of the contingent of active-duty officers:

1. Militarymen who graduate from officers' training schools;
2. Non-commissioned officers who have satisfactorily carried out combat duty;
3. Militarymen performing specialized and technical tasks who are college graduates;
4. Cadres of nonmilitary sectors assigned to army positions slotted for officers;
5. Reserve officers.

\*A Hanoi Domestic Service, 17 January 1982 in FBIS, Daily Report: Asia and Pacific, 21 January 1982, p. K1.

Article 6. Officers have the rights and obligations of citizens as provided for by the constitution and the law of the SRV.

## Chapter II

### Military Grades and Positions of Officers

Article 7. The system of military grades of officers of the VPA is regulated as follows:

1. The general level comprises four grades: Senior general, colonel general or admiral of the navy, lieutenant general or vice admiral of the navy, and major general or rear admiral of the navy.

2. The field level comprises three grades: colonel [dqaij dqaij tas], lieutenant colonel and major.

3. The junior level comprises four grades: Senior captain, captain, senior lieutenant and lieutenant.

Article 8. The commissioning and promotion of military grades for officers must be considered on the basis of the military grades specified for each position, revolutionary quality, operational proficiency and the time in grade. Officers in each position or grade must complete the training program specified by the minister of national defense.

Article 9. The times in grade required for promotion consideration are established as follows: 2 years from lieutenant to senior lieutenant, 2 years from senior lieutenant to captain, 3 years from captain to senior captain, 4 years from lieutenant colonel to colonel.

Time in grade is not required for consideration for promotion of general grades.

The time spent in training schools is included in the time in grade required for promotion.

In wartime, the time in grade required for promotion is shortened, as determined by the Council of Ministers.

Article 10. Officers who have recorded achievements in combat and other assignments and who have served in areas of difficulty and hardship or performed special tasks in an outstanding manner shall be considered for promotion to a higher military grade prior to their completion of the required time in grade.

Article 11. Officers who have completed the required time in grade but are found to be unqualified for promotion shall have their time in grade extended by the maximum time in grade. By that time, if they are found to remain unqualified for promotion, they shall be transferred to reserve duty.

Article 12. The system of positions in the army shall be established by the Council of Ministers on the basis of the organization of the army at that period of time, and submitted to the Council of State for ratification. Two military grades shall be designated for each position.

Article 13. The assignment of officers to the various positions must be based on organizational demand, revolutionary quality, operational capability, physical fitness and trained specialty.

Article 14. The authority to appoint positions and commission and promote military grades is regulated as follows:

The Council of State shall appoint such positions as chief of the General Staff and director of the General Political Department; and shall commission and promote such military grades as senior general, colonel general and admiral of the navy.

The chairman of the Council of Ministers shall appoint such positions as vice minister of national defense, deputy chief of the General Staff, deputy director of the General Political Department, directors and deputy directors of other general departments, inspector general and deputy inspector general of the army, and commanders and deputy commanders of military regions, armed services, army corps and armed branches and corresponding positions; and shall commission and promote such grades as lieutenant general, vice admiral of the navy, major general and rear admiral of the navy.

The minister of national defense shall appoint such positions as division commander, department director and corresponding or lower positions; and shall commission and promote grades from lieutenant to colonel. The echelon that is empowered to appoint certain positions and commission or promote certain grades shall have the authority to demote, degrade, remove from positions and strip officers or military grades.

Article 15. The echelon that is empowered to appoint certain positions shall have the authority to assign officers to such positions. The minister of national defense has the authority to nominate deputy commanders of military regions, armed services, army corps, armed branches and corresponding positions.

Article 16. In an emergency, officers holding positions above and including regiment commander are empowered to suspend the positions of subordinate officers and temporarily appoint their replacements; and he must immediately notify the competent echelon for its consideration and approval.

Article 17. Officers may be promoted or demoted by only one grade at a time. Promotion or demotion by more than one grade is permitted only in special cases.

Article 18. Officers may be assigned to higher or lower positions than their military grades warrant. Officers may be assigned to lower positions in the following cases:

1. When it is necessary to strengthen the command of essential units.
2. When the unit concerned has its table of organization reduced or its organizational structure altered.
3. When the capability or physical fitness of the officers concerned does not qualify them for their current positions.

Article 19. For officers who are demoted, the times in grade for promotion shall be computed from the date of demotion. Demoted officers, if they show progress or score outstanding achievements in combat and other operations, may have their times in grade for promotion reduced from those mentioned under Article 9.

Article 20. Active-duty officers who are assigned by the Ministry of National Defense to serve in nonarmy sectors, are called detached officers. Detached officers have the same obligations and rights as unit officers. The system for detached officers shall be established by the council of ministers.

Article 21. Officers with higher military grades are superiors of officers with lower military grades. In cases where there is an officer holding a subordinate position to another officer with the same or lower military grade, the holder of the subordinate position is the junior officer.

Article 22. Superior officers must carry out the system of periodic appraisal of subordinate officers in accordance with the regulations and procedures established by the minister of national defense.

### Chapter III

#### Reserve Officers

Article 23. Reserve Officers are classified as Category I reserve officers and Category II reserve officers in accordance with the age groups mentioned under Article 32. Officers who reach the age limit for active duty as provided for under Article 32 or who do not meet the requirements for promotion consideration as provided for under Article 11, shall be transferred to reserve duty. Officers who reach the age limit for Category II reserve duty or who are found to be physically unqualified shall be excluded from reserve duty.

Article 24. The transfer of active-duty officers to reserve duty or the mobilization of reserve officers to active duty and the exclusion of reserve duty for officers, depending on their grades, shall be decided upon by the competent echelons mentioned under Article 14.

Article 25. The following persons who have completed the training program for reserve officers shall be considered for military commissions and registered for reserve duty:

1. Discharged noncommissioned officers;
2. Graduates from colleges and higher education schools; and
3. Cadres or nonarmy sectors who possess specialized skills necessary for military operations.

Article 26: The authority to commission, promote, demote and strip military grades of reserve officers is exercised in the same way as for active duty officers, as provided for under Article 14.

Article 27. Based on the results of their military training and their achievements in national defense service, reserve officers may be considered for promotion to a higher military grade.

The time in grade required of reserve officers for promotion consideration is 2 years longer than that established for each grade of active-duty officers. Reserve officers who are mobilized for active duty shall be considered for promotion to the corresponding military grades of the army positions to which they are assigned.

Article 28. Reserve officers, upon receiving assignments or taking up residence in a certain locality, must register at the local military organ of that locality and are subjected to the control of the local military organ.

Article 29. In peacetime, reserve officers who have not yet had active service may be called up to serve in army units for a limited period of time. In wartime, reserve officers shall be mobilized for army service in accordance with a general mobilization order or a limited mobilization order.

Article 30. Reserve officers are duty-bound to attend military training courses as decided by the minister of national defense. The benefits they will receive while in training centers shall be determined by the Council of Ministers.

#### Chapter IV

##### Officers' Duties and Rights

Article 31. Officers have the following duties:

1. To be absolutely loyal to the fatherland, the people and the SRV state, to uphold revolutionary vigilance, to fulfill well all assigned functions and tasks and to stand ready to fight, make sacrifices and firmly defend the Socialist Vietnamese fatherland;
2. To exemplarily observe the party's line and policies, state laws and military rules and regulations and to uphold the soldier's sense of discipline in their units;
3. To respect the laboring people's right to socialist collective mastery, to resolutely defend socialist property and the people's lives and property, to promote democracy and firmly maintain discipline in the army and to care for the spiritual and material life of soldiers in their units;
4. To regularly train in order to enhance their knowledge in the political, military, cultural, scientific, technical and professional fields as well as their ability to organize, command and manage troops, to improve their revolutionary ethics and to train themselves physically in order to fulfill their tasks well.

Article 32. The following are the age limits set for army service of all active service officers and reserve officers:

Junior level officers:

- Active service, 38;
- Reserve army Category I, 45;
- Reserve army Category II, 50.

Colonel:

- Active service, 55;
- Reserve army Category I, 58;
- Reserve army Category II, 60.

Major:

- Active service, 43;
- Reserve army Category I, 50;
- Reserve army Category II, 55.

Major general and rear admiral:

- Active service, 60;
- Reserve army Category I, 63;
- Reserve army Category II, 65.

Lieutenant colonel:

- Active service, 48;
- Reserve army Category I, 55;
- Reserve army Category II, 58.

The age limits are not set for the army service of lieutenant generals, vice admirals and officers of higher ranks. However, when any of these officers' health condition or capability makes them unfit for their job, the retirement system shall apply.

Article 33. Based on the army's needs and the revolutionary ethics, capabilities and health condition of each officer, the national defense minister has the right to extend the active service period of officers of the rank of colonel and below. Each extension may run from 1 to 3 years, but extensions shall not exceed the age limits set for Category I reserve officers and shall not exceed the age limits set for Category II reserve officers with regard to officers who do scientific and technological research work. The extension of the active service periods for major generals and rear admirals shall be decided by the Council of Ministers.

Article 34. Officers scoring achievements in combat or work performance shall have their achievements appraised for awarding of orders, medals or state honorary titles or any other form of commendation.

Article 35. Officers who fail to implement orders or fulfill tasks, or who commit other mistakes or are guilty of other shortcomings shall be subject to military disciplinary measures. Offending officers shall be prosecuted.

Article 36. Any officer whose military rank has been forfeited but who shows improvement in his conduct may be considered for bestowal of a military rank commensurate with his assigned function.

Article 37. Any reserve officer who violates military discipline or state laws and who proves himself unworthy of the rank he has acquired or proves himself to be an unbecoming officer shall be demoted or have his officer rank forfeited. The promotion of a demoted reserve officer shall be examined and carried out in accordance with the regulation stipulated in Article 19.

Article 38. Officers' leaves are specified in the leave system. In wartime or in emergencies, the national defense minister can order the suspension of all leave, and all officers on leave must return to their units immediately.

Article 39. Officers enjoy the pay and allowance systems specified by the Council of Ministers.

Article 40. Officers are encouraged and assisted in developing their abilities in the scientific and technological fields, and academic titles and degrees shall be accorded them in accordance with the general state academic system. Valuable research in military science and art, in military science and technology or in general science and technology shall be appropriately commended and awarded.

Article 41. The local administration shall care for the material life of officers' families and shall create conditions for them to fulfill their tasks well.

Article 42. Officers who terminate their active service period but who have not yet reached the retirement age shall be accorded priority in the selection for studies at schools or shall be assigned jobs in state agencies or social organizations. If no jobs can be secured for the officers and if they have served on active duty for 20 consecutive years, they are entitled to benefits under the retirement system.

Article 43. Officers who reach retirement age or who are forced to retire because they are no longer physically fit for the job shall be notified 3 months in advance so they can make preparations for their retirement and shall be cared for in their spiritual and material life in accordance with the relevant state systems.

## Chapter V

### Final Stipulations

Article 44. This law rescinds the 29 April 1958 law on the VPA officers' service system.

Article 45. The Council of Ministers shall specify the details for the implementation of this law.

This law was passed on 30 December 1981 at the Second Session of the Seventh SRV National Assembly.

[Signed] Nguyen Huu Tho, chairman of the SRV National Assembly